

# The Steep Rock VISTA Fall 2008

# New President & Chairman of the Board

Steep Rock's Annual Trustee Meeting in May brought many changes to the Board.

Ed White, longtime Trustee and Chair of Steep Rock's Stewardship Committee was elected President. Ed served 6 years on the Board, starting in 1996, and returned to the Board in 2003. During that time the was Chairman of the Steep Rock's Stewardship

### Committee.

John Herrmann was elected Chairman of the Board. John was first elected as a Trustee in 1990 and served six years at that time. He was Vice President for several years and returned recently to take up the position of Chairman of the Board. John has been an active member of Steep Rock's Preservation Committee and is also the longtime Chair of the Investment Committee.

New Trustees elected were Michael Lloyd, Mark Lyon. Gene Pinover, John Quist, and Andy Shapiro. Ed praised outgoing President Mike Jackson and Chairman of the Board John Millington for their many accomplishments and long time devotion to



New President Ed White congratulates outgoing President Mike Jackson at the Trustees' Annual Meeting. Outgoing Chairman of the Board John Millington is in the background.

## **Shepaug River Update**

Work at the Shepaug Reservoir is under way. The new drain gate valves have been ordered and work on Peter's Dam continues. Grouting on the downstream face is complete and grouting on the upstream face has begun. New electrical lines have been installed from Peter's Dam to the gate house. Forming is under construction for the new weir (see



Construction at Peter's Dam, below the Shepaug Reservoir

The reservoir level in the Wigwam Reservoir has been lowered for drying and installation of the new pipeline through the reservoir bottom (see below).

Test pits have been dug along the new pipeline route to check for conditions. Work is expected to continue there this week. A majority of the proposed new equipment has been approved.



Drained Wigwam Reservoir .

### **Purple Loosestrife**

What is purple loosestrife? Purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*) is an introduced perennial weed that aggressively invades wetland habitats, destroying these valuable ecosystems and reducing the diversity of native plants. Purple loosestrife plants can grow up to 10 feet tall and produce as many as 50 stems on a single plant. The leaves are opposite, lance-shaped and are directly attached to the stiff, 4-sided stems. Purple flowers are borne on tall spikes from July through September each year. One mature purple loosestrife plant may produce up to 2.5 million seeds each year.

Where does purple loosestrife grow? In Connecticut, purple loosestrife is found in wet, sunny areas in every county in the state. Typical wetland habitats for this noxious weed include river and stream banks, wet meadows and fields, flood plains, ponds, lakes, marshes, and disturbed areas such as road-sides and construction sites.

Is purple loosestrife a naturally-occurring plant? No. Purple loosestrife was originally from Europe and was introduced into the U.S. and Canada in the early 1800s. It is not a native, or naturally-occurring plant in Connecticut or any part of the U.S. but is considered an introduced, or exotic, species. Why is purple loosestrife a problem? When purple loosestrife made its way over to America from Europe in the 1800s, all of the beneficial insects that kept the loosestrife population under control in Europe were left behind. As purple loosestrife began to invade wetland habitats in the U.S., it aggressively took over areas where cattails, sedges, rushes, and many other native plant species were growing. Purple loosestrife has since eliminated many of these native plants, which are so important to animals as a food source, for nesting materials and to provide protection for birds, muskrats, turtles and other species.



Caroline Savage, St. Lawrence Centre

How can purple loosestrife be controlled? Young purple loosestrife plants can be pulled by hand, as long as the entire plant and the roots are removed completely. Mowing or hand-pulling older, larger plants or applying herbicides is more difficult, expensive, and may only be a temporary remedy to control purple loosestrife in wetland areas. Do not plant purple loosestrife in your garden. See Figure 2. Biological control is the only long-term solution to manage purple loosestrife infestations and reduce populations of this invasive weed. In 1996, Connecticut began introductions of beneficial insects into several wetland areas to begin controlling purple loosestrife and restore the quality of these wildlife habitats. The introduction of beneficial insects is part of a national purple loosestrife biological control program that began in the U.S. in 1992.

This information and much more can be found on the CT DEP



These students from Joan Macsweeney's Shepaug Middle School 6th grade class are participating in a program sponsored by the Washington Environmental Council. They are about to release loosestrife eating beetles at the Macricostas Preserve. The beetles were grown under netting on a loosestrife plant.



Galarucella pusilla, the loosestrife eating beetle. Observed on a loosestrife plant at Macricostas.

### **Members of the Steep Rock Association**

Fiscal Year October 1, 2007 to September 30, 2008

We are most grateful to the following members for their support during our last fiscal year.

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# **Contributions Were Made** in Memory Of

Paul Dobkin Bill Rislev **Judith Stevens** 

### Six Conservation Easements Protect 221 acres.

Steep Rock accepted Conservation Easements on more than 221 acres of land in 2007. By preserving parts of their land in perpetuity, the following individuals helped us fulfill our mission of protecting the natural resources of our town.

> Linc Cornell Ron Garfunkel & Sandra Breakstone Sherwin Goldman Erica Klauer Cynthia and Dan Lufkin Eliza Paolucci



What is it? Two trees? One branch? Is the photo upside down? Trustee Pearv Stafford took this photo in Steep Rock, along the railroad bed.

# Eagle Scout Candidate Fights Invasives at Macricostas Spencer Rust Coordinates Project

The following article is Spencer's report to us on his Eagle Project

### **Eagle Project**

An Eagle project is a community service project that the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) requires of Eagle Scout candidates. The project must be planned, financed, and directed by the candidate.

For my Eagle project I wanted to do something outdoors. I met with Natalie Dyer, a Steep Rock Trustee, and asked her for suggestions. She told me the Steep Rock Preserves had a serious invasive plant problem they need help with.

I decided that this would be a project that I would like to take on. The project consisted of cutting down the invasive plant called Burning Bush, dragging it into piles for animal habitats, and planting some native plants where the invasive plants used to be. Mrs. Dyer helped me with the fundamentals of my project. We went to the Macricostas Preserve and she showed me where I should start working, what invasive plants to look for, and what native plants to plant.

In addition to paper work required by the BSA, I did some research on my own. I looked up the major invasive plants that are found in this area: Japanese Barberry, Oriental Bittersweet, Garlic Mustard, and Burning Bush. These plants were transported a long time ago from various places around the world. All of them are detrimental because of their aggressive characteristics, their ability to adapt easily, and their few natural enemies. These invasive plants compete for resources with natural plants and usually the invasive plants win, especially in areas where the forest has recently been cleared or disturbed. The invasive plants reduce biodiversity. A healthy ecosystem has a high biodiversity. Biodiversity is important because the different varieties of plant species accommodate more species of animals and the forest is less susceptible to disease and other stresses.

My project was a total success. I finished what I set out to do and a little more. We mostly went after Burning Bush but we cut a lot of Japanese Barberry and Oriental Bittersweet also. We put roughly 75 man hours into destroying all those invasive plants. There are still many invasive plants that we didn't have time to cut. We only scratched the surface. There were places where the Burning Bush canopy blocked out most of the light and nothing could grow under it. The native shrubs we planted were Spice Bush, Winterberry, Mapleleaf vibernum and High Bush Blueberry.

My project made me see that invasives are a serious problem that needs to be dealt with. It isn't easy to get rid of the invasive plants, but it is a battle we need to keep fighting.

# 20 (19 humans, one dog) Finish The Steep Rock Challenge

### **36er Challenge Finishers**

Name	Sign-up date	Finish
Peary Stafford	7/07	11/07
BK Stafford	7/07	11/07
Hillary Criollo	9/07	11/07
Bill Hopkins	10/07	11/07
Theo Grayson	10/07	11/07
Denise Arturi	8/07	12/07
Peter Arturi	8/07	12/07
Robert Winkler	1/08	4/08
Jay Hubelbank	8/07	5/08
Sandra Sockett	8/07	6/08
Mitchell Sockett	8/07	6/08
Richard Wanderman	3/08	6/08
Loren Kahn	3/08	6/08
Susan Branson	9/07	9/08
Michele Rybos	8/07	9/08
Barbara Damon-Hill	4/08	9/08
Vincent Belanger	4/08	9/08
Natalie Dyer	7/07	9/08
Buffum Dyer	8/07	9/08
Olaf Soltau	8/07	9/08

## **Nesting In Hidden Valley**

Our friend and Steep Rock member Beth Schiffer took the pictures at right. She walks in Hidden Valley almost every day and noticed the nest in a crevice on the side of the trail.

We're not sure what species they are. Anyone care to quess?

### Northwest Corner Land Trusts Convene

Several small land trusts from the northwest corner of the state have been meeting at the Steep Rock Association office, in Washington Depot, to share their ideas, information, experiences and concerns. The Steep Rock Association is the land trust of the town of Washington, and the largest organization in the group, with a staff of three. Some of the other land trusts have regular help from consultants, but no employees, and many are all volunteer organizations.

The group has a wide variety of perspectives, from an organization that is just starting up to one of the state's oldest land trusts. Participating land trusts are Bethlehem Land Trust, Cornwall Conservation Trust, Goshen Land Trust, Litchfield Land Trust, Morris Land Trust, Norfolk Land Trust, Naromi Land Trust (Sherman), Steep Rock Association (Washington), and the Warren Land Trust.

Susan Branson, Steep Rock's Executive Director, said, "I convened the group because I thought we should all get to know each other. After all, we work to accomplish the same goals – preservation and care of the land around us - in the same area of the state, and many of us did not know each other before these meetings. I call our get-togethers the SALT talks (Small Area Land Trusts). Meeting in a small group, sitting around a table drinking coffee and eating locally made donuts, provides a relaxed atmosphere and offers a comfortable format that encourages everyone to participate."

Conversations at the first two meetings covered a wide variety of topics, including stewardship, land acquisition, IRS and board issues, to name a few. The group is very enthusiastic about the meetings and has decided to meet four times a year. Next time they get together, the group will discuss conservation easements and the host of issues they entail.

Reprinted from the July issues of CLCC's enews.









# **Tropical Storm Hanna Causes 2008 Picnic Cancellation**

When the weather forecast on Friday morning was still for wind and three to five inches of rain likely on Saturday followed by lingering showers on Sunday, the picnic Committee had to make the tough decision to cancel the picnic.

As far as anyone can remember, it was the first time this has ever happened. Many remember cold damp days, and even some showers during the event.

When asked to comment, Honorary Trustee Bob deCourcy said "there have been years when hurricanes were in the area, but they [the hurricanes] were thoughtful enough to turn out to sea



Near the Stephen C. Reich Bridge, August 2008

### **Steep Rock Association**

Telephone 860-868-9131 FAX 860-868-5034

www.steeprockassoc.org

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