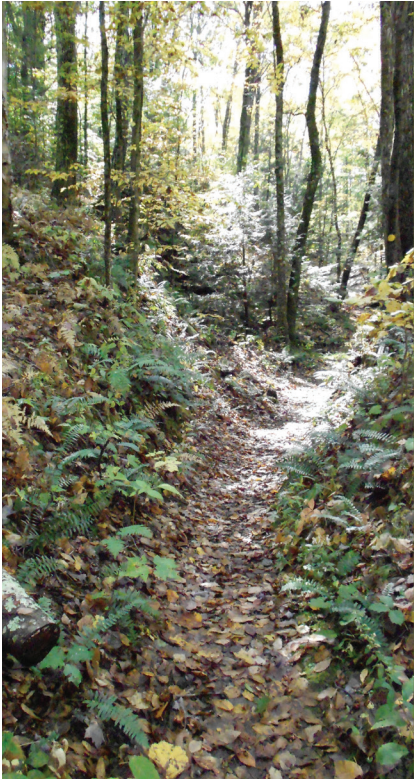




# The Steep Rock VISTA

Winter 2013



*Conservation is a state of harmony between men and land.*

– Aldo Leopold

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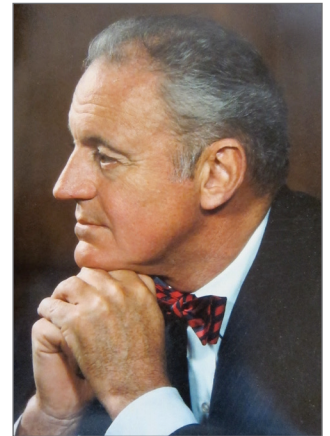
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## Conservation Leaders Remembered

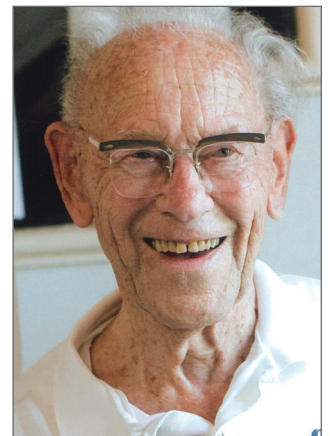
*The Steep Rock Association family is greatly saddened by the recent deaths of two of its most prominent leaders. Merrell (Ted) Clark and Robert (Bob) deCourcy, both Honorary Trustees, are fondly remembered as dedicated conservationists who championed land preservation in the Town of Washington.*

***Ted worked with Steep Rock Association for 20 years***, serving as Trustee (1992-2003), Vice-President (1998-1999) and Honorary Trustee (2004-2012). During his tenure, Ted helped Steep Rock acquire over 50 conservation easements, earning him the title "King of Easements." He died on September 17, 2012 at the age of 90.



*Merrell (Ted) Clark*

***Bob was active in the Association for an astonishing 49 years***, many of which were in a leadership capacity. He served as Trustee (1964-1991), Vice-President (1969-1971), President (1972-1985) and Honorary Trustee (1992-2013). During that time, Bob became the face and spirit of Steep Rock Association. He passed away on January 28, 2013 at the age of 98.



*Robert (Bob) deCourcy*

*Both men leave behind an indelible mark on Steep Rock Association and the entire Washington community. They will be remembered for their generous and caring nature, for their leadership in conservation endeavors, and for their unwavering commitment to open space preservation.*



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## From the Executive Director...“Reflections”

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Several weeks ago I lost a friend. He had a kind and gentle soul. He was extremely knowledgeable about the people, places and events in his beloved town. He was a master storyteller, spinning countless tales of history and humor. His name was Bob deCourcy.

Many of you had the great privilege of knowing Bob for decades. I was blessed with his friendship for only a few years. But in that short time, I grew to know an amazing man and quickly discovered why he was, and is still, revered throughout this community.

I first experienced Bob’s kindness and generosity soon after accepting this position at Steep Rock, but before beginning my long journey north to Washington. I think Bob understood the initial loneliness I would face in transitioning to this new job, in a new town hundreds of miles away from my wife and closest friends. And so, in one phone call, he eased my transition by offering his unoccupied house on Wykeham Road as a temporary residence. For six months, his house became my home. Who takes in a total stranger like that and gives them free run of the family house? Bob deCourcy.

Over the ensuing months, Bob took me under his wing; introducing me to countless new faces, sharing stories of Steep Rock and dining at his favorite restaurant. I couldn’t have asked for a better teacher or a more endearing new friend.

I will miss Bob. I will miss his friendship, his wealth of knowledge, his wonderful sense of humor, and his compassion for Steep Rock. He may be gone, but he will never be forgotten. I will forever have etched in my mind the vision of those twinkling eyes and boyish grin that preceded the telling of every story.

— Steve

## Explorations in Nature

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Join us as we explore various facets of nature through guided hikes and educational programs. All programs are free; however, **pre-registration is required**. Enrollment is limited and registration is on a first come – first serve basis. To register for a program, please complete and return the enclosed registration form or complete and submit the registration form on our website ([www.steeprockassoc.org/whats-happening](http://www.steeprockassoc.org/whats-happening)). If a program is canceled, registered participants will be notified.

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### CHARTING THE NIGHT SKY

**Saturday, March 16**

**11:00 am - 12:00 noon**

**LOCATION:** Gunn Memorial Library – Wykeham Room

**AUDIENCE:** Ages 12 and older

Join us for this daytime exploration of the night sky. With a basic understanding of the mechanics of the earth-sun-moon system and other major planets, a night sky chart can be used to identify all significant objects in the sky on any night of the year. Using a chart, we’ll visualize and track the path of celestial bodies. Participants will receive an 11” x 17” color chart to help them continue exploring the night sky throughout the year.

**PROGRAM LEADER:** Ray Reich is retired after a forty-five year career teaching high school physics and astronomy (most recently at The Gunnery). Ray is currently a Steep Rock Association Trustee.

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### SPRING WILDFLOWERS

**Sunday, April 21**

**10:00 am - 12:00 noon**

**LOCATION:** Hidden Valley Preserve Parking Lot (Bee Brook Road/Hwy 47)

**AUDIENCE:** Adults

Explore the beauty and diversity of spring wildflowers inhabiting the Shepaug River floodplain at Hidden Valley Preserve. We’ll learn how to identify the species’ encountered and discuss their ecological importance.





Red Trillium

**PROGRAM LEADER:** Betsy Corrigan is a biological consultant whose work primarily focuses on non-native invasive plant surveys

and native plant and natural community inventories.

**NATIVE AMERICAN WALK**

**Saturday, April 27 | 1:00 pm - 3:00 pm**

**LOCATION:** Macricostas Preserve Parking Lot (Christian Street)

**AUDIENCE:** Ages 13 and older

Delve into the Native American history of Bee Brook, Meeker Swamp, and Waramaug’s Preserve. Join us for a leisurely walk through the meadows and woodlands of Macricostas Preserve, the homeland of Native American communities for thousands of years prior to European settlement. Participants will learn about the bountiful variety of natural resources that likely drew indigenous peoples to the region and discuss the importance of these resources to Native American cultures. We’ll also discuss local archaeological discoveries that have contributed to our knowledge of Native settlement and land use within and adjacent to Macricostas Preserve.

**PROGRAM LEADER:** Lucianne Lavin is Director of Research and Collections at the Institute for American Indian Studies in Washington, CT. She is a member of the state’s Native American Heritage Advisory Council and Editor of the journal of the Archaeological Society of Connecticut. Dr. Lavin is an anthropologist and archaeologist who has over 30 years of research and field experience in North-eastern archaeology and anthropology.

**BIRDS & BUTTERFLIES**

**Sunday, May 19 | 8:00 am - 10:00 am**

**LOCATION:** Macricostas Preserve Parking Lot (Christian Street)

**AUDIENCE:** All ages; children under age 13 must be accompanied by an adult



Black & White Warbler

Late May is a great time to explore the avian populations of the Steep Rock preserves. Year-

round resident species, as well as migrants returning from their wintering grounds, are in their finest plumage and males are at their peak of vocal courtship behavior.

Butterflies are also emerging from their overwintering stages and can be equally pristine. Join us for this early morning walk around the agricultural field at Macricostas Preserve in hopes of spotting a number of these winged wonders. Be sure to bring binoculars if you have them.

**PROGRAM LEADER:** Peary and BK Stafford have been life-long admirers of birds and in recent years have developed a passion for butterflies as well. They have travelled throughout the world observing birds, but love nothing more than the spring avian show at Macricostas.

**MAMMALS OF MACRICOSTAS**

**Saturday, June 1 | 9:00 am - 11:00 am**

**LOCATION:** Macricostas Preserve Parking Lot (Christian Street)

**AUDIENCE:** All ages; children under age 13 must be accompanied by an adult

Macricostas Preserve is a haven of diverse habitats. From wetlands to upland deciduous forests, these areas are teeming with wildlife. Come explore these habitats and learn about the small to medium-sized mammals inhabiting these areas. We’ll check track pads and small “no kill” Havahart traps for critters, and learn to identify mammals by their signs. All captured animals will be identified and then released. We’ll also have an introduction to radio telemetry.

**PROGRAM LEADER:** Wendy Welshans is a science teacher at The Forman School in Litchfield, CT. She is the Director of *The Rain Forest Project*, a field-based project in Costa Rica gathering data on endangered species with gifted local high school students.

**ROSES OF MACRICOSTAS**

**Saturday, June 1 | 1:00 pm - 3:00 pm**

**LOCATION:** Macricostas Preserve Parking Lot (Christian Street)

**AUDIENCE:** Adults

Macricostas Preserve is a new destination for rose enthusiasts! Local gardeners have donated antique roses to establish a heritage rose collection at the preserve. In early June, more than 75 blooming roses will adorn the grounds of the old Camp House. Among them are three ancient



Rose de Rescht

rose varieties that were found on-site before the project began, as well as the rarely seen ‘Green

Rose’, a rose connected through family legends to the Underground Railroad. Come hear the fascinating stories of the roses and learn how you can grow them in your own garden.

**PROGRAM LEADER:** Stephen Scanniello, president of the Heritage Rose Foundation, is the author of many books on roses. The 2009 book, *A Rose By Any Name*, was the inspiration for the creation of the Heritage Rose District in New York City and this sister project in Macricostas Preserve.

**CT TRAILS DAY HIKE**

**Sunday, June 2 | 1:00 pm - 3:00 pm**

**LOCATION:** Steep Rock Preserve Parking Lot (near riding ring)

**AUDIENCE:** All ages; children under age 13 must be accompanied by an adult

Join us for a fun, family hike to the summit of Steep Rock Preserve. We’ll follow the old railroad bed along the Shepaug River and then climb steeply through the woods to the summit where we’ll be rewarded with stunning views of the river valley below. Bring a drink and a snack to enjoy at the top. Dogs on-leash are welcome to join the hike.

**PROGRAM LEADER:** Torrance Robinson is a dedicated Steep Rock volunteer who enjoys organizing and leading group hikes in his leisure time.

**ORIENTEERING**

**Saturday, June 15 | 9:00 am - 11:00 am**

**LOCATION:** Steep Rock Preserve Parking Lot (near riding ring)

**AUDIENCE:** All ages; children under age 13 must be accompanied by an adult

Have you ever wanted to learn how to hike through the woods and never get lost? Join us for an invigorating and exciting morning among the trees and rocks along the beautiful Shepaug River as we develop and sharpen our orienteering skills. Participants will gain hands-on experience using a map and compass to navigate the preserve, learn how to read the land and, quite possibly, learn something new about themselves.

**PROGRAM LEADER:** Nick DePreter is a teacher at the Horace Mann School’s Dorr Nature Laboratory in Washington, CT. He has taught outdoor skills and environmental science for over ten years in the U.S. and abroad.

## Fiscal Year 2012 (October 2011 – September 2012) Donors

Each year the financial support provided by our members enables us to maintain safe trails to hike and ride, initiate land preservation projects and offer public environmental education programs. Your generous contributions are crucial to our success. Steep Rock Association is grateful to the following members for supporting our land conservation and education initiatives in Fiscal Year 2012 (October 2011 - September 2012).

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## Help Improve Trail Safety

Steep Rock needs you – our loyal hikers and equestrians – to help us improve the safety and management of our extensive network of trails by reporting trail conditions. There are three ways to get involved.

*Year-Round Monitoring:* Here's where you can help the most. Has a tree fallen and blocked a trail? Is there severe erosion? Do we need more trail signs or blazes? Whether you traverse one favorite trail all year or enjoy different trails through the seasons, we want you to report any trail issues you observe.

So how do you report a problem? It's simple ... visit the Steep Rock website ([www.steeprockassoc.org/getinvolved](http://www.steeprockassoc.org/getinvolved)), scroll to the bottom of the page and click on "Trail Conditions Reporting Form and Trail Reference Maps". Complete the form and send it to us by clicking the "Submit" button. Use the numbered trail sections on the reference maps to pinpoint the location of the problem area.

*Storm Response Monitoring:* Some of our most dedicated volunteers have signed up to be Trail Monitors — our "eyes on the ground" following major storms. As we have seen after recent weather systems such as Winter Storm Alfred and Hurricane Irene, storms often devastate our nature preserves. Clearing debris and restoring damaged trails can take months of hard work. Before we can begin that clean-up effort we need to identify the hardest hit areas. Trail Monitors, assigned specific trails to evaluate,

help with this process. Their reports allow us to quickly assess damage, prioritize and start repairs and speed the reopening of damaged trails. If you would like to help with this effort as a Trail Monitor, please complete and submit the Volunteer Form located on the website ([www.steeprockassoc.org/getinvolved](http://www.steeprockassoc.org/getinvolved)).

*Annual Trail Assessment:* Beginning this spring, we're setting aside one weekend at each preserve to perform an annual comprehensive review of trail conditions. We need your help with this vital task, which will be used to create a trail maintenance work plan for the entire year. Please watch the Steep Rock website for the scheduled dates.

### Show Your Support in FY 2013

As we near the midpoint of our fiscal year (October 2012 – September 2013), we are still \$60,000 shy of reaching our membership goal. If you have not yet contributed to Steep Rock Association this fiscal year, please donate now. Every dollar contributed by our members goes directly to support our conservation initiatives and education programs. By investing in Steep Rock, you are investing in our community.

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