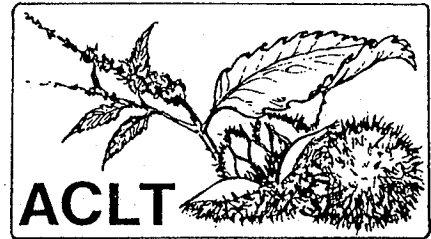


American Chestnut Land Trust, Inc.
Post Office Box 204
Port Republic, MD 20676



NEWSLETTER

Volume 7 - Number 2

Editors: Ellen and David Farr

Spring 1993

Earth Day Activities at ACLT—April 17

Plans are well underway for a repeat of last year's successful, four-community roadside clean-up and rally with neighbors from Western Shores, Kenwood Beach, Governors' Run and Scientists Cliffs. On Saturday, April 17, between 10 a.m. and 12 noon, volunteers from each community will pick up trash along the roadways in their own neighborhoods and deliver it in bags to the ACLT main parking lot on Scientists' Cliffs Road. We anticipate there will be a county dumpster on hand to receive the trash. Mark Switzer is now gathering together a burly crew to haul heavy refuse from a known dump site on ACLT property just off Parkers Creek Road. A rally will follow in the main parking lot from noon to 1:00 p.m. with hot-dogs, sodas and beer to reward the hungry and thirsty workers and celebrate the morning's accomplishments. Last year 70 people walked the roadsides for the trash clean-up, and 50 or more people of all ages stayed on for refreshments and the rally held at the Western Shores beach pavilion. Everyone enjoyed the opportunity of getting to know their more distant neighbors and urged us to make this an annual event. For more information, call Ted Post, Western Shores, 586-0848, Elaine Cratty, Kenwood Beach, 586-2227, Steve Kullen, Governors Run, 586-1793, Sandy Roberts, Scientists' Cliffs, 586-1791. Margaret Young, 535-1637, is ACLT's coordinator for the event. Please call the ACLT office, 586-1570, to sign up for Mark's crew or volunteer in some other capacity. This is a rain or shine event. A tent will offer shelter during the rally if it rains. Happy Earth Day!

1993 Science Fair Awards

At this year's Calvert County Science Fair Awards Ceremony on March 20 ACLT presented awards of \$50 Savings Bonds and honorary ACLT memberships to four students for their outstanding, environmentally-related projects. In the Junior Division: Julie Schenk of Northern Middle School for "Where's That Clean Country Air?" and to Emily Bowen of Plum Point Middle School for "Bugs—A Sign of Good Health." In the Senior Division: To

Northern High students, Mackenzie Ditzler for "Breakwater Barriers" and Joseph Bliffin for "What's Up D.O.C.? The pH Factor." Making the selections was not easy for ACLT judges, Dr. Peter Vogt, Sue Hamilton, Robert Pfeiffer and Dr. Robert Ulanowicz.

There were some 173 Science Fair entries this year, and more than \$4,000 in special awards were provided by business, service organizations and individuals of Calvert County. Congratulations Julie, Emily, Mackenzie and Joseph! We are pleased to welcome you into membership.

ACLT Open House

On Saturday, April 17, from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. (just after the rally), ACLT will host an Open House in the cabin that now serves as the ACLT office and meeting room. The cabin is across Scientists Cliffs Road from the ACLT main parking lot. Light refreshments will be served. Come and meet Peg Niland, our Administrator, and have the opportunity to talk with ACLT Board Members who will be on hand to answer your questions on what lies ahead for the land trust, how we can better serve you and our community and what you are able to offer to help us along the way. We are delighted with our new quarters and want you to see how much volunteers can accomplish with limited resources if they care enough.

Spring Walks

Meet at ACLT parking lot.

- Native and Immigrant Flora: Reading Past Land Use in the ACLT led by Peter Vogt. APRIL 24, 11a.m.
- Neotropical Migrant Birds : led By Sue Hamilton. MAY 2, 9 a.m.
- Boundary Walk: led by Art Cochran and Mark Switzer. MAY 30, 8:30 a.m.
- May Bird Count: May 8: For information call Sue Hamilton 586-1494.

Board of Directors

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•Weekly walks for seniors?

If you would like to participate in informal walks through different parts of the ACLT on a weekly basis, call Sue Hamilton 586-1494. If there is an agreeable day and time, we can share exercise and trails.

Chestnut Arboretum Work Day

On Saturday, April 24, a work day is scheduled for the Chestnut Arboretum. Volunteers should meet at the parking lot across from Gate A at Scientists Cliffs at 8:30 am. The Chestnut Arboretum is badly overgrown with briars, bushes, sprouting stumps and dead wood. In its present state it is most difficult to monitor the trees. Volunteers should come prepared to work with clippers, saws, rakes etc. For more information call Sandy Roberts 410-586-1791.

Naturalists' Calendar

Plants and Birds to look for this spring.

Plants	Migrant Birds
	<i>Early April</i>
Shadbush in flower	Tree Swallow
Bloodroot	Broad-winged Hawk
Toothwort	Chipping Sparrows
Spring beauties	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher
Rue Anemone	Palm Warbler
Jack-in-the Pulpit	Black-and-white Warbler
	Yellow-throated Warbler
	<i>Mid-April</i>
Mayapples flower	Wild Turkeys frequent
Strawberries in bloom	Brown Thrasher
Fiddlehead ferns	Northern Parula Warbler
Morels	Wood Thrush
	Gray Catbird
	Chimney Swift
	Ovenbird
	Red-eyed Vireo
	<i>End-April to Early May</i>
Showy Orchis	Indigo Bunting
Lady Slippers	House Wren
Chestnuts in leaf	Great Crested Flycatcher
Morels still found	Blue Grosbeak
	Yellow-billed Cuckoo
	Scarlet Tanager
	Black-throated Blue Warbler
	<i>Mid-May</i>
Solomon's Seal	Yellow-breasted Chat
	American Redstart
	Blackpoll Warbler

Last Week in May

Wild Strawberries ripen

June

Deer, foxes and snakes seen frequently.

Watch out for ticks.

More Strawberries
Wineberries ripen
Shadbush berries ripen
Butterfly bush in bloom

July

Blackberries ripen
Blueberries ripen

Act Now—Time Is Running Out

From time to time we are called upon by the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, The Trust for Public Lands, The Land Trust Alliance, the Maryland Land Trust Alliance, The Nature Conservancy and other responsible environmental organizations we respect to join with them in opposing some particular legislation or act of government that is contrary to ACLT's purposes and goals. These calls to action are frequently on short notice and do not coincide with newsletter publication dates or Board Meetings. Often ACLT officers and directors are able only to respond as individuals not as spokesmen for the land trust as a whole. A case in point is Maryland Senate Bill 34 before the legislature now on Private Property Rights. To quote the Chesapeake Bay Foundation's Bay Watchers Action Alert, "There is an increasingly militant property rights movement in Maryland which advocates that landowners should be allowed to do as they please on their own land. These advocates maintain that laws such as forest or wetlands conservation are 'regulatory takings' requiring compensation for development profits lost by landowners." This bill is not only opposed by environmental groups but also by the State Attorney General who contends that "this bill does nothing to increase property rights, but merely creates unwieldy bureaucracy. Private property rights are expressly written in the U.S. Constitution."

Opponents to the bill point out that "communities depend on local and state land use laws to protect their quality of life. Inappropriate land use can foul a neighborhood's air, create unwanted traffic congestion and expose residents to health hazards or environmental degradation. Your right to protect your community's well being is in serious jeopardy if this Senate Bill becomes law." If you concur with the CBF and the ACLT Board which discussed this issue on March 27 that this is a bad bill, please make your views known by phone or in writing today to our representatives in the legislature:

Senator Bernie Fowler
James Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

Delegate George W. Owings III and
Delegate J. Ernest Bell II
Lowe House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

The toll free number is 1-800-492-7122.

Other issues before the legislature that are also of serious concern to environmentalists are Senate bill #345 and House Bill #1256 on Clean Cars for which CBF urges your support. House Bills #272, #724 and #1,000 designed to delay implementation of Maryland's new Forest Conservation Act is opposed by the Chesapeake Bay Foundation.

ACLT would benefit from an active, on-going ACLT Legislative Affairs Committee to keep track of Bills coming before the Maryland House and Senate, to present testimony before Committees in support of or opposition to proposed legislation affecting the environment and to find means to develop broader participation within our own membership. Because of our 501(c)(3) IRS tax exempt status there are some restrictions on ACLT's lobbying activities. We are privileged to make our environmental views known on any and all legislative matters at local, state and federal as long as our positions remain *non-political*, patterned after the activities of the League of Women Voters, if you will.

Please call the Office, 586-1570, to volunteer your time and experience to this new committee venture.

Neotropical Migrants

Many of our local birds spend the winter in Central or South America. Since zoogeographers call that section of the world the "neotropics," these birds are known as "neotropical migrants." Many of them are well-loved songbirds—the Wood Thrush, the Scarlet Tanager and the Northern (Baltimore) Oriole, for example. Warblers and flycatchers are also neotropical migrants. Most of these birds nest well inside forested areas, netting them another general term, "forest interior dwellers," or "fids" (a term learned from our forester, Dave Chessler!).

These migrants have lost a great deal of breeding habitat in recent times, as more and more woodland is cut down and converted into housing developments and shopping malls. At the same time, some of their winter territory is disappearing. The rapid destruction of tropical rain forest is well-known, but even those species not utilizing the rain forest are losing territory. While some bird populations may be showing the adverse effects of this loss,

research indicates that the effects of fragmentation of breeding habitat are severe. These birds are very vulnerable to nest predation and parasitism. Almost all build open cup nests quite close to the ground. Blue Jays, raccoons and foxes raid these nests while Brown-headed Cowbirds lay their own eggs in them. A female cowbird is an extremely efficient laying machine—she may lay as many as 20 eggs in a season, usually in separate nests. The hosts are invariably smaller—their young lose out in competition to the cowbird nestling. Although some of the unfortunate hosts abandon their nests or build over the unwelcome foster egg, not all have developed these responses. Once I stood below a tall sapling watching a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher (a midget of the bird world) building a tiny nest 12 feet above my head. And, in the next tree over, seen a cowbird, also watching. Shaking my fist didn't help. The gnatcatchers were doomed to become foster parents to a 'monster'.

The results of all this havoc are reducing populations more rapidly in some areas than others.

How big does a "forest" have to be to discourage cowbirds from getting to the middle? Over 1000 acres. Can we stop cowbirds from parasitizing our fids? Probably not—but we can try not to make it any easier for them. We can avoid widening trails, walk only on the ones already cut, and leave undergrowth undisturbed. The magic "edge effect" should be avoided. (An edge is the area of intersection of different habitats, such as fields and woods and lawns.) Edges are great places to watch birds—the ones that live in each habitat and those which specialize in the edge. Edges are good for some birds - Mockingbirds and Cardinals thrive at the edges of woods and fields. However, these birds are doing very well already. And Cowbirds do very well in edges.

We can also keep track of the numbers and kinds of birds which breed here, and share their beauty while we can. What we are doing in preserving contiguous tracts of woodland is certainly a step in the right direction. People who live in areas that have been completely subdivided mention the loss of many birds we can still see and hear in the ACLT. Each of our streams plays host to a pair of Louisiana Waterthrushes, warblers which nest on the side of the stream bank. You may see one teetering by the edge of the water or perched a few feet above the ground, letting out an occasional burst of wistful sound. In the higher ground above the streams Hooded Warblers nest near the Laurel. On the dry slopes the dry buzz of the Worm-eating Warbler is occasionally to be heard. Wood Thrushes' ringing songs fill our woods - still. But for how many more years? Which birds will disappear first? Which ones will your grandchildren never see? When I first started to keep a "life list," forty years ago, I fully

expected to see a Bachman's Warbler, some day. That day will never come—they are now considered extinct. The process was irreversible before ornithologists were aware that it was occurring.

Indeed, the flood of spring migrants is more like a stream today. The numbers and the variety of birds seen has been drastically reduced. The process of loss is gathering momentum. Make sure you see more of these beautiful creatures before they disappear forever from our sight.

—Sue Hamilton

Important Reminder

No hunting is allowed on ACLT property without permission of ACLT. For more information contact Mark Switzer.

Revolving Fund

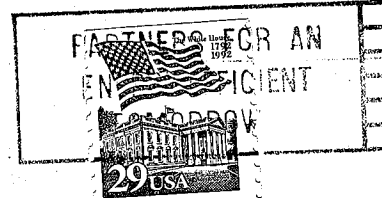
The County Commissioners are considering establishing a Revolving Fund for the purpose of assisting non-profit, charitable land trusts acquire land for open space preservation. Money from the fund could be used to purchase land on condition that it be paid back within a specified amount of time. This would address a common problem land trusts face of having to come up with money "up

front" and, sometimes, at short notice. At the same time, it would provide a means of obtaining and managing recreational open space for the benefit of County citizens at very low cost to the taxpayer.

The Idea of establishing such a fund came from Jim Odgers and Karen Edgecombe of the Plum Point Environmental Land Trust (PPELT). They presented the idea to the Commissioners in December and, with ACLT endorsement, to Senator Bernie Fowler in January. The County Commissioners acted quickly to hold a public hearing on February 2nd and Senator Fowler followed up immediately by introducing enabling legislation in time to meet the deadline of getting it introduced in this session. Several members of ACLT attended the hearing and spoke in favor of the proposal.

The fund isn't a sure thing though, by any means. It still has to be approved by the legislature and the Commissioners still have to determine whether or not the County can afford to establish such a fund and what the rules should be for making loans. In any case, Plum Point Environmental Land Trust, Senator Fowler and the Board of County Commissioners are to be commended for taking it this far.

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ACLT Celebrates Earth Day 1993
with a Roadside Clean-up and Rally
Saturday, April 17, 10 am to 1 pm
See inside for details

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