

Mountain Views

Quarterly Newsletter of Stowe Land Trust

Spring 2013



The Lepine Sisters Do It Again

by Heather Furman

© Peter Miller, all rights reserved, from his new book
A Lifetime of Vermont People

Just mention the name Lepine to anyone who's been around Stowe long enough and you'll likely get an instant smile. The Lepine sisters, Gert, Jeannette and Therese, are the subject of Peter Miller's iconic photo that conjures the very soul of rural Vermont. Known for their staunch conservation ethic and positive outlook on life, the sisters led diverse and interesting lives until their family farm in the old town of Sterling (today's southwest corner of Morristown), called them back to Mud City.

The sisters farmed hundreds of acres in Mud City in the decades after World War II. Jersey cows grazing in the pasture behind their farmhouse became emblematic of rural life in Mud City, which has remained unchanged as the Stowe area developed rapidly around them. But when they finally sold their dairy herd in 1996 and with the sisters in their 70's, many wondered what would become of the rolling meadows and spectacular views. Was this special corner of Vermont destined to become another sub-division of high-end residential homes?

"It was the land that meant something to me," said Gert in a 2009 video produced by Stowe Land Trust, "it's always there for you." And with that in mind, Gert began working with Stowe Land Trust to conserve her favorite woodland in Sterling Valley, and with Vermont Land Trust to conserve their family farms. Gert conserved her 640 acre farm by donating a conservation easement to VLT and Jeanette and Theresa soon followed suit. Today, the sisters have conserved over 1100 acres in both Morristown and Stowe.

A small sign tacked to a tree marks the location of the Lepine sister's conserved land along Sterling Valley Road. In 2002, they donated a conservation easement on the 48 acre parcel that would keep development from changing the place where they have fond memories of fishing in the brook. "Every piece that we have conserved, there's a very special connection to it," said Gert. When they conserved the land, Gert thought it would be nice to reserve a 2-acre building lot where they had once built a small cabin. But as more residential development sprang up in the quiet woods of Sterling Valley, Gert, now 84, began having second thoughts about that 2-acre building lot, and one day last fall picked up the phone to call our office.

"I don't know what I was thinking," Gert explained over the phone. "We want all of that land conserved and we want everyone to enjoy it." From that day forward, SLT began a process of amending the conservation easement to include protection of the 2-acre building lot. Due to strict IRS regulations and other factors, SLT rarely amends conservation easements. But in this case, the sisters' explicit wish was to enhance conservation by removing the option to develop. They also wanted to ensure that the public would always have access to the parcel so future generations could enjoy it much the same way they had.

There is warmth and humor at the kitchen table where Gert and Jeanette have pulled together an assortment of chairs for us to sit (Therese passed away in 2010). Mazy, the sisters' well-fed beagle,



From the Executive Director



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Stowe Land Trust is dedicated to the conservation of scenic, recreational, and productive farm and forest lands for the benefit of the greater Stowe community.



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Spring brings with it many sources of inspiration, but none as genuine as the Lepine sisters' conservation ethic (cover story). Their decision to add land to an existing easement embodies this ethic, and has provided us, as well as future generations, over 1100 acres of conserved land. Thank you Gert and Jeannette!

In 2003, one of my first duties as a freshly minted executive director was to facilitate the acquisition of SLT's Mill Trail property. In the intervening years, the property, with its tall cool forest and historic cabins, has been both a source of pride for SLT as well as a source of inspiration. Owning buildings is unique for a land trust, and the Moravian Cabin is particularly special. The great potential that the Cabin holds has motivated SLT to reach for a vision of complete restoration and public use. It's rewarding that after so many years of planning and fundraising, we're poised to bring the Cabin back to life for the community. We look forward to sharing the evolution of this project as it unfolds this summer and fall.

As always, our spring issue brings you our annual report – highlighting what you helped make possible. The protection of Cady Hill Forest and the Palmer property, the support of our volunteers, and the ongoing stewardship of our conserved lands all contributed to a successful 2012. We are grateful that our membership continues to grow, and that we've had Trapp Family Lodge come on board as a major Corporate Partner. The support from the community continues to fuel our work to protect and steward the best places Stowe has to offer. Thank you!

Spring also gives us the opportunity to reacquaint ourselves with our landscape, to enjoy wildflowers in our backyard and witness the emergence of our furry woodland friends. We hope you will join SLT on one of our monthly outings to experience spring's awakening!

Mill Trail Cabin Restoration Update

Soon members of the community will be able to enjoy a summer day from the cool shade of the Mill Trail cabin. SLT is moving forward with restoration of the Cabin this year. A Request for Proposals was released by SLT's Mill Trail Committee in March and plans are to award the contract by mid-April.

A site visit with interested contractors was held on March 14th. Contractors were introduced to the project and the challenges presented by the remote location. SLT looks forward to working with a group of craftsmen that recognize the historical integrity and quality that went into building the Cabin.

Once restored, visitors to the property will be able to see the inside of the Cabin during open house events scheduled throughout the year.



SLT also plans to make the Cabin available to the public for day use events and primitive overnight stays. Please contact Stowe Land Trust at 802.253.7221 or email becca@stowelandtrust.org if you would like more information about availability of the Cabin for events or outings.

Anyone interested in learning more about the Cabin or the Mill Trail property owned by Stowe Land Trust can do so by visiting www.stowelandtrust.org.

What's Going On?

Stowe Land Trust Outings and Events Calendar

Join us to learn more about conserved lands or just to have a great time with friends and family. For more information about an outing feel free to call 802.253.7221 or email info@stowelandtrust.org.



© Ben Kilham

Black Bear Behavior

Thursday, April 25, 2013
Green Mountain Club Barn - 7 pm
A presentation by Ben Kilham, Wildlife Biologist and bear behavior expert. Details on the back cover.



Pinnacle Society Wildflower Walk

Saturday, May 11, 2013
Kirchner Woods 9 - Noon
Pinnacle Society members are invited to take a hike with Kate Carter, local wildflower expert and nature guide author. Participants will receive a copy of her book *Wildflowers of Vermont*. Details on page 6.



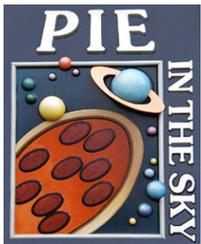
Adams Camp Group Ride

Saturday, June 15, 2013
Adams Camp Bridge 9 - Noon
Join SLT for a group ride in Adams Camp on the popular Kimmer's and Hardy Haul loop. Trails are a combination of single and double track and are best for intermediate to advanced riders. Be sure to bring your own equipment and water.



Stowe Pinnacle Hike

Saturday, July 20, 2013
Pinnacle Meadow Parking Area 9 - Noon
The striking views and refreshing breeze on top of Stowe Pinnacle make this a great summer hike. Round trip distance is 2 miles. Be sure to bring water, a snack and sturdy footwear.



Pie in the Sky Benefit Bake

Thursday, May 16, 2013
Pie in the Sky - All Day!
Each year members of the community have an opportunity to gather together in support of land conservation over pizza. So plan to head to Pie in the Sky for lunch, dinner or both because 100% of dine-in pizza sales will be donated to Stowe Land Trust.



Hike to Stowe Pinnacle and Beyond

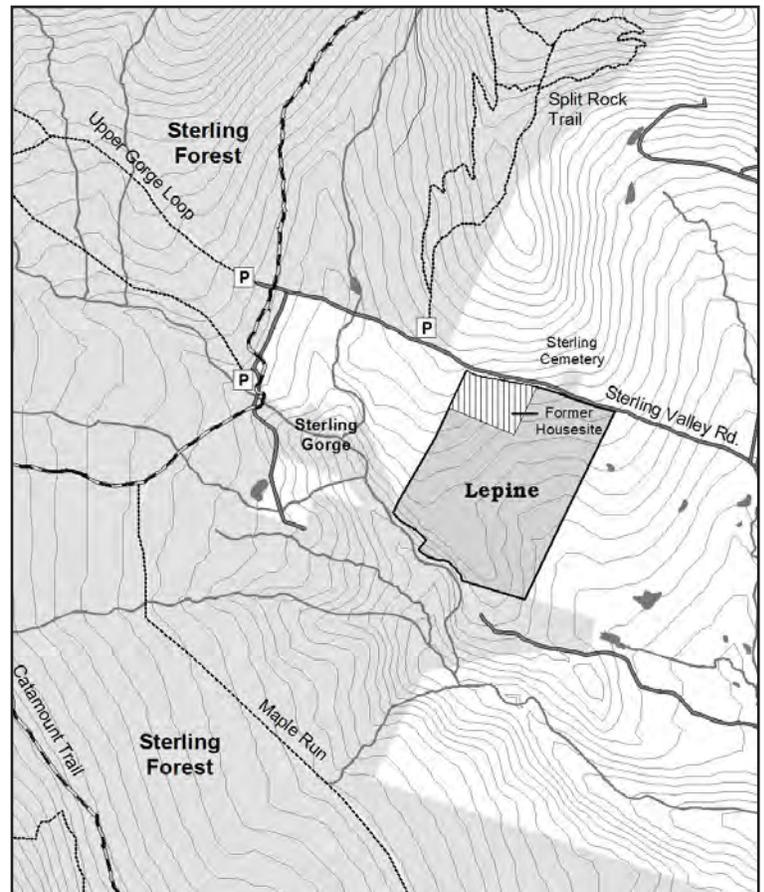
Saturday, May 18, 2013
Pinnacle Meadow Parking Area 9 - Noon
Ever wonder what the next ridge looks like, or what's around the next corner on the trail? Go beyond Pinnacle and explore the Skyline Trail that traverses the Worcester Range. Be sure to bring water and sturdy hiking shoes. Hikers can turn back at the Pinnacle or continue on to explore new trail.

Lepine - continued from cover story

poses for photos and enjoys special attention from the two visitors who've come to deliver the paperwork that will permanently conserve their land. "When you get to be my age, you get a lot of comfort knowing your affairs are taken care of," Gert says. The somber moment passed quickly when Jeanette chides Gert for not conserving the 2 acres in the first place. They laugh. "We're just glad to know that people will be able to enjoy that land forever" Gert said, and it's clear that the sisters sense of well-being stems from knowing they have truly given something special to future generations. As we chat in the afternoon light, this knowledge somehow fills us all with a sense of satisfaction.

Watch Gert Lepine tell her story.

Visit us online: <http://www.stowelandtrust.org/about-us/>



2012 Annual Report

A Year in Review



▲ CADY HILL FOREST

268 acres of forest land adjacent to Stowe Village was permanently protected with a conservation easement and ownership was transferred to the Town of Stowe in May, 2012. The Cabral and Hillman families worked with Stowe Land Trust and the Town of Stowe to conserve their land and its amazing trail network and important wildlife habitat. Purchase of this land was supported by many partners including the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board, the Town of Stowe, the Open Space Institute, the Stowe Mountain Bike Club, and over 650 individuals and family foundations.

The Cady Hill Forest conservation project combined everything we love about land conservation - high quality habitat and viewshed protection near the heart of Stowe Village and easy access to miles of recreation trails. Located adjacent to the town owned Macutchan Forest property, permanent protection of Cady Hill Forest created a contiguous 320 acre forest owned and managed by the Town of Stowe. Access to the property is now available from a recently constructed parking area on Mountain Road as well as from the Iride Cycles park-

ing area and the end of Cady Hill Road. Access from the end of Cady Hill Road is closed during the winter season to protect deer wintering area habitat. For more information and a map of Cady Hill Forest, please visit www.stowelandtrust.org.

Since taking ownership of the property, the Town of Stowe has been hard at work making this *your* forest. In addition to the new parking area, a trailhead kiosk, signs and way-stations have been installed on the property. The Town, with help from Sustainable Trailworks also began developing a trails master plan for the property to guide future management of the recreational resources on the property.

Cady Hill Forest is now a community owned centerpiece of Stowe recreation and natural beauty. The popular trail network and the newly developed infrastructure offer an anchor for recreational tourism, an important contributor to the local economy here in Stowe and surrounding towns.

◀ PALMER PROPERTY

Along the Little River in Stowe's Lower Village, Stowe Land Trust has been working with landowners to protect the river corridor and allow permanent access to its floodplain. The property, owned by Creative Ventures, LLC, consists of 12.5 acres of agricultural fields and river corridor. The agricultural land is farmed by the Pike family. The protected property also includes an important section of VAST snowmobile trail, and protects 750 feet of frontage and riparian area on both sides of the Little River.

The conservation project was funded by the VT Department of Environmental Conservation's Ecosystem Restoration Program. Administered by the Agency of Natural Resources's River Management Division, the program is intended to provide funding for the purchase of river channel management rights within the corridors of sensitive and erosive streams.

This conservation easement represents the second river corridor project completed on this section of the Little River. The first, completed in 2008, was also the first stand alone river corridor easement in Vermont. The earlier project consists of 10 acres and three parcels owned by four different landowners and is directly adjacent to the north of the Palmer project. Learn more about river corridor easements at www.stowelandtrust.org.





◀ STEWARDSHIP

SLT, with the help of 24 volunteers, met its obligation to monitor its 32 easements and 5 fee owned properties. Volunteer youth crews conducted trail maintenance activities like pruning, raking and culvert clearing at Wiessner Woods, Kirchner Woods and Mill Trail. Students from UVM completed natural resource assessments, a trail infrastructure inventory, and invasive species inventory for the 5 properties SLT owns and manages.

Landowner permission was secured for the section of the Mill Trail that crosses private land. This will allow the State of VT to plan for trail work on the section of trail on State Forest land across from Bingham Falls.

SLT was able to expand its stewardship program to include GIS mapping in order to produce better quality maps for stewardship, land protection and for you, our members.

COMMUNITY ▶

Monthly outings continue to be a popular way for visitors and residents to get out and enjoy nature and recreation on conserved land. Outings range from berry picking to backcountry skiing and take place on a variety of conserved lands to encourage people to explore new places or share their favorite trails with a friend.

SLT received a Norcross Grant to work with Ecopixel to update its website. Visitors to the site will notice a lot more photos, more information about our conserved lands and a more user friendly form for making online donations.

Office volunteers have become an indispensable part of office culture at SLT. They help prepare thousands of newsletters and membership letters for mailing in exchange for the reviews of the latest movies or new restaurants and a cup of coffee. Thank you for folding this issue and many past newsletters!

Trapp Family Lodge and SLT announced a partnership to carry on the von Trapp family legacy to protect the working landscape with a one dollar nightly donation per guest room to SLT to help ensure Stowe's essential beauty is preserved for the future.

SLT's relationship with the community continues to be the driving force behind our operations, with membership and corporate support contributing 71% to our annual operating income. 80% of our members renew each year and we welcomed 35 new members and 65 former members to the SLT community in 2012.



SLT changed its fiscal year in 2012. The financial information provided is based on a restated FY'12. SLT contracts with an independent accounting firm each year to complete a financial review. The full report is available upon request.

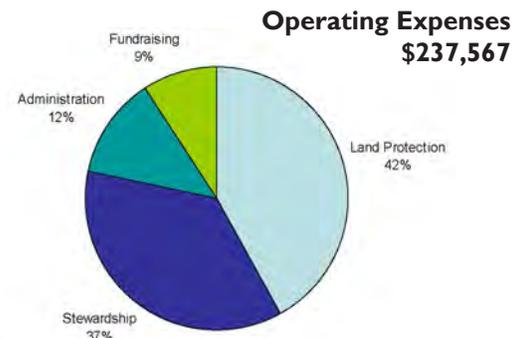
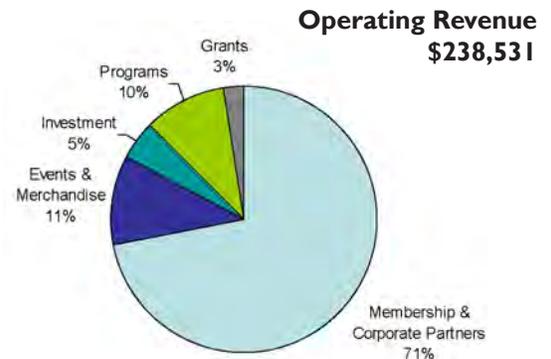
2012 Restricted Accounts Summary

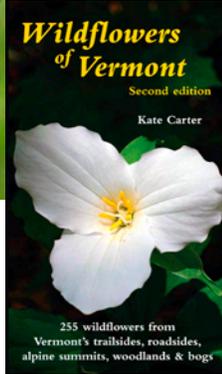
Income

Land Protection	\$1,531,474
Stewardship	\$ 30,156
Investment	\$ 4,361
Endowment	\$ 545
	\$1,566,535

Expense

Land Protection	\$1,481,453
Stewardship	\$ 25,266
	\$1,506,719





The Pinnacle Society was created to acknowledge and appreciate the people who help SLT conserve our spectacular natural landscapes for future generations. It recognizes donors of \$1,000 or greater during Stowe Land Trust's membership year (November 1 - October 31).

Pinnacle Society members and their guests are invited to join SLT on Saturday, May 11, 2012 for a spring wildflower walk with local expert and nature guide author, Kate Carter.

Kate will lead an outing at Kirchner Woods from 9 am to noon introducing you to the botanical treasures of early spring. Pinnacle Society members who attend the walk will receive a copy of Kate's guide *Wildflowers of Vermont*.

If you are interested in learning more about the Pinnacle Society or becoming a member, contact Executive Director, Heather Furman by emailing heather@stowelandtrust.org or call 802.253.7221.

STOWE
LAND TRUST
*Pinnacle
Society*

Stowe Land Trust wishes to recognize and thank the following 2013 Pinnacle Society members.

Nancy and Bill Anderson
Allan F. Beck
Richard and Nancy Bennum
Charlie and Gibby Berry
Paul and Kathy Bosland
Nancy and David Bradbury
Phil Branton and Ellen Lazarus
Rick and Ann Bresnahan
Julie and Kevin Buchanan
Kitty and Allan Coppock
Denise Burt Cushwa
Deborah and William Davis
Derrick and Lynn Davis
Eric and Vivian Denardo
Graham Dower and Shelia Cheston
Peter and Bari Dreissigacker
Trowbridge and Claudia Elliman
Mary and Tom Evslin
Linda Sallop and Michael Fenlon
Nat and Caren Goodhue
Gerry and Terry Griffin
David Harding and Jan Nyquist
Richard and Susan Hart
Christopher Hill and Susan Flicop
Cliff Johnson
Christy Patt and Bob Juzek
John and Diane Kemp
Bonnie Knight
Richard and Susan Leadem
George Lengvari
Walt and Diane Looney
Gilbert Lopes

Blair, Chantal, Tanisha & Landyn McIntosh
Claire Tweedy McMorris
John and Millie Merrill
Bunny and Peter Merrill
Darsey and Joe Moon
Melissa and David Norton
Dan and Cookie Owen
Jack and Caroline Patten
John and Adrienne Peacock
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Union Bank
Gaetano and Susan Vicinelli
Jorge and Gretchen Vivoni
Richard Wagner
Richard and Sally Watts
Prudence Webb
David Wilkens and Molly Pindell
Roger M. and Jill J. Witten

Pinnacle Society donations received after March 20th will be recognized in the summer issue of Mountain Views.



The Ermine



Kris Orr

While snowshoeing at Mill Trail this winter, a friend of Stowe Land Trust encountered a member of the weasel family, called an ermine. She took some photos (seen here) which we shared and found people were charmed and curious about the creature.

We decided to do some research and discovered an interesting wildlife fact sheet developed by the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department. Below are excerpts from the fact sheet which describe the ermine's history, characteristics and habitat needs.

The short-tailed weasel, also known as the ermine, is the second smallest member of the weasel family. Like the long-tailed weasel and its other relatives, the short-tailed weasel is a predator. The short-tailed weasel occupies a wider variety of habitats than the long-tailed weasel, which include wetlands, forests and fields. It is trapped for its fur, but not avidly.

Physical Description

Like all members of the weasel family, the short-tailed weasel has a long, slender body, short legs and a long neck. It can grow to a length of seven to thirteen inches and a weight of one to seven ounces. The male is noticeably larger than the female.

The short-tailed weasel is capable of quick, agile movements. The coat is reddish brown on its back, head, sides and tail. However, it is white in color under the chin and on its belly. The tip of its tail is black, similar to that of a long-tailed weasel. In the summer an excellent field marking, besides the obvious tail length, is that the short-tailed weasel has a white line down its hind legs and the long-tailed does not. In winter, the short-tailed weasel will

molt to an all white coat, except for the tip of its tail, which remains black. It is referred to as an ermine in this color phase.

Life Cycle

Short-tailed weasels breed from late spring to early summer, but development of the embryos does not begin until the following spring. After mating, the fertilized egg remains in limbo through a process known as delayed implantation. In March as the days begin to lengthen, the development of the fetus will resume. This unique process is thought to benefit the weasel by allowing the female to give birth when environmental conditions are at their most favorable.

Food Items

Like the rest of the weasel family, the short-tailed weasel is a carnivore, preying on a variety of animals. The short-tailed weasel takes voles, shrews, rabbits, rats, chipmunks and nesting birds. Short-tailed weasels will also store, or cache, extra food for later use. When their preferred food supply is low, they will eat prey that is easier to catch like fish, birds or insects. In summer, they also eat fruit and berries.

Habits and Habitat

Short-tailed weasels can be found in a variety of habitats ranging from wooded areas to grasslands. Short-tailed weasels require areas of heavy cover but tend to avoid dense forests. Weasels will burrow, or build a nest in rock or wood piles, in a hollow tree, or under a building. Often, rather than building their own nest site, they will simply take over one of their prey's. Weasels are not social animals. With the exception of the breeding season, it is rare to find a male and female together. Although these fierce predators are active during the day, they are considered to be nocturnal. They are quite aggressive and will defend their territories from any intruder. They are skilled hunters having great speed and agility. They can also swim and climb.

History

The short-tailed weasel has proven itself as an adaptable species. As the landscape changed over the last 150 years, from intensive farming to abandonment, the short-tailed population fluctuated, but has remained an important species in Vermont's ecological community.

Short-tailed weasels are an important predator. They play a vital role in controlling populations of rodents that might otherwise damage agricultural crops or transmit disease.

Abundance

Short-tailed weasels are common throughout their range. They prefer open woodlands and transitional areas between forests and fields located near a water source.

A complete, downloadable version of the Wildlife Fact Sheet is available at <http://www.vtfishandwildlife.com/vtcritters/fact-sheets/mammals/Short%20tailed%20weasel/Short%20tailed%20weasel.pdf>



Kris Orr

Black Bear Behavior

A presentation by Ben Kilham, Wildlife Biologist and bear behavior expert.

Thursday, April 25, 2013 - 7:00 pm
Green Mountain Club Barn
4711 Waterbury-Stowe Road
Waterbury Center

This event is free and open to the public!

Ben's popular lecture is based on firsthand experience raising cubs and observing black bears. It is illustrated with photos Ben has taken documenting different behavior.

This presentation is part of the Shutesville Wildlife Series hosted by the Waterbury Conservation Commission with support from the Waterbury Tourism Council, Sterling Falls Gorge Natural Area Trust, Stowe Conservation Commission, and Stowe Land Trust.



Ben Kilham

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