



THE
EDWARD L. ROSE CONSERVANCY

Conservancy Currents



Seasons Greetings! December 2014

Dear Friend,

I hope you are enjoying this holiday season. No matter how early the Christmas rush starts, it still seems to sneak up on me. In the midst of the chaos, I try to keep in mind what is really important: family, friends, community, and the natural world we live in. I love this time of year in Northeastern Pennsylvania. The snow is beautiful and adds a festive air to the holidays.

I hope you have a wonderful holiday and are able to gather with family and friends. I hope you will join us in the coming year as we continue to protect this beautiful area. As a child, we sang a song on trips, "Over the river and through the woods to Grandmother's house we go...." I would like to amend those lyrics, "Over the protected river and through the protected woods...." It may mess up the melody a bit, but it still sounds beautiful to my ears.

Happy Holidays!

Kris Ely

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Living With A Conservation Easement

One of the most common questions asked when discussing conservation easements is about violations. With all the Christmas time talk about "naughty or nice" lists, it seems the perfect time to talk about violations.

First, easement violations are not common. Most landowners find it easy to abide by the terms of their easement because the easement is written in very practical terms and tailored for each landowner and property. And unlike many legal contracts, easements are written in clear, plain language, not legal jargon.



For the most part, people who donate conservation easements on their properties do not violate them. If there ever is a violation, it usually happens once a property has changed hands. Subsequent landowners are typically not as committed to the protection of a piece of land as a landowner who donates an easement.

Violations can range from something as simple as the landowner forgetting to notify us of an allowed activity (requiring prior notification) to a major violation where a landowner builds a house that is not allowed or undertakes a clear-cut timber harvest. In all violation cases, the Conservancy's first goal is to work with the landowner to bring the property back in to compliance with the terms of the easement. The Conservancy identifies the violation, determines the appropriate corrective action, and establishes a time frame for the correction.

The most common violations are the minor ones and are easily resolved. Fortunately, the major ones are rare. The key to dealing with violations is to prevent them through open communication with landowners. The Conservancy does not want to play the role of "big brother". Instead, we want to work with landowners so they fully understand the terms of their easements and remember to contact us if they have any questions about planned activities.

If you want to discuss your options for protecting your property, please don't hesitate to give Kris a call at 570-278-9500.

Wild Things In Your Woodland

Black-capped Chickadee (*Poecile atricapilla*)



The black-capped chickadee is a small songbird with a short bill. Male and female chickadees look alike, with a black cap on the head, a black bib, and white cheeks. They are mostly grey on the wings, tail, and back, and they have buff colored sides.

As the weather grows colder and snow begins to fall, black-capped chickadees remain active symbols of nature, even on the coldest winter days. Common year-round residents in New York State, chickadees survive the winter by roosting in dense vegetation and tree cavities. On cold winter nights, these small birds sometimes enter a state of regulated hypothermia, dropping their body temperature 18 - 22° F below normal daytime temperature. By doing so, they conserve a great deal of energy.

Insects form a large part of the chickadee's diet, particularly in the summer. In the winter, they rely more on seeds and berries. As such, chickadees are one of our most common birds at feeders. Research has shown that, especially during the fall, chickadees will hide food under bark or dead leaves, or in knotholes. Later, when food is scarce, they return and retrieve the hidden food items. They are able to remember thousands of hiding places for up to a month! During fall and winter, chickadees often flock together to feed, and may flock with other species including titmice, nuthatches, brown creepers, and kinglets.

Chickadees live in wooded habitats of all kinds, including deciduous and mixed deciduous/coniferous woodlands, open woods, old fields, parks, and neighborhoods. They are most abundant along forest edges. Chickadees will excavate nest cavities in dead trees or dead tree limbs by pecking away rotting wood. They will also use old woodpecker holes if available, and sometimes will use nesting boxes when natural cavities are not available. The male and female both work to excavate the nest cavity, though the female alone lines the nest cavity with moss, feathers, plant down, hair, and insect cocoons. Once the cavity is lined, the female lays 6-8 eggs, which she alone incubates. The male feeds the female while she is on the nest, and both parents feed the young after they hatch.

Forests with between 50 - 75% canopy closure, and a well-developed middle and lower canopy layer, are optimum habitat for chickadees. The abundance of leaves under these conditions attracts insects that provide food for these birds. Because black-capped chickadees nest in tree cavities and can only excavate a cavity in soft or rotten wood, landowners can create ideal breeding habitat by managing to provide two snags (trees that are dead or partially dead) per acre between 4 and 10 inches in diameter. Snags provide holes, or cavities, in which chickadees and many other species can roost or nest and will help keep your woods alive year-round with the sights and sounds of bird life.

Kristi Sullivan Co-Directs the Conservation Education and Research Program at Cornell's Department of Natural Resources. More information on managing habitat for wildlife, and upcoming educational programs can be found by visiting www.arnotconservation.info

Christmas Memories from the Conservancy

From Kris Ely:

A couple weeks ago, I headed out with my son to get a Christmas tree. I was reminded of my childhood and getting bundled up to head to the woods. We would drive the tractor out to the edge of the woods on my grandfather's farm at Heart Lake. We would then hike down into the woods and seek out the perfect tree. When we got back home, we enjoyed hot chocolate while we decorated. These days, I support a local Christmas tree farmer. The trees are more manicured, more uniform and certainly beautiful. But none are prettier than those "wilder" trees of my childhood.



My holiday reflections caused me to ask a few Conservancy Board members to share some of their favorite Christmas memories.

From Keith Chadwick:

Like others who grew up in the 1950's and 60's, Christmas was both a festive and religious time. Festive, with the Holiday bright lights, decorations, extra baking, family visits, and of course, in the end, all of the Christmas presents. Religious, in being taught the true meaning of Christmas. We were church members and went each week. The Christmas Eve service was special, but also always long! Even still, I remember waking up super early, with my sisters, excited to rush down the stairs and see if SANTA left all of the presents we asked him to bring. It was truly magical to turn the corner and see the tree lit up with presents overflowing the room. Bikes and dolls and many items too large to wrap were visible in the room. Laughter fills the room, along with dad taking endless pictures. "What did you get? Hold it up for everyone to see".

As Adults, we carry on the tradition of Christmas. Kids return home, and grandkids appear. And with all of the needs in the world, we do our best to reach out and help- either directly, or through a variety of charities which do God's work. Its still a special time, with Peace, Joy, and Love abounding.

From Anthony Palombaro:

My favorite Christmas gift happened one December when I took my son to volunteer with me at Toys for Tots run by the Binghamton Police in the Binghamton Plaza. He was a teenager and they assigned him to help parents carry their bags of toys and put these bags into their cars.

I could tell he was touched by how little many of these families had, yet how grateful they were to have some gifts to share and a Christmas together. One young mother, who had 4 little kids in her car, was working with my son, trying to put the toys in her trunk without her little ones catching on. It was comical as the children, all excited and bouncing all over the inside of the car, knew something was up but just couldn't tell what.

Mom was very deft at putting the toys in the trunk without letting them get a good look and my son was trying his best to help her keep the dream of Santa alive for these kids. Just as the last bag went into the trunk, this young mom was brought to tears when the director of the program came quietly around the corner and gently gave her a brand new bicycle for her brood.

Looking back I believe this experience has had a lasting effect on my son, and on me as well. This was my favorite Christmas gift because it was a wonderful unscripted moment we shared that will stay with each of us forever.

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