

# The Ridgeline

FALL 2025 | [trlandconservancy.org](http://trlandconservancy.org)



*Clearing the Way for New Life*

## Pinchot Sycamore's Heirs Planted at Stout Family Fields

**Y**ou may know of the legendary Pinchot Sycamore which stands where Hartford Road crosses the Farmington River in Simsbury. At about 100 feet tall and 28 feet around, it's Connecticut's second largest tree—estimated at 250 years old, and possibly as old as 500.

Over the centuries, this ancient tree has scattered countless seeds which have been carried on wind and water to take root across the region.

On September 13, volunteers planted three of its heirs at TRLC's Stout Family Fields in Bloomfield.

The planting was the vision of TRLC member Ted Goerner, who founded the West Hartford Tree Project with his wife, Carolyn. In May, he discovered one of the Pinchot Sycamore's seedballs on the ground. He nurtured a few seeds to life in pots until they were ready for their permanent home.

A small group of TRLC members gathered at Stout Family Fields for the planting. The chosen site is in

the former "Isle of Invasives," which volunteers have spent more than 100 work hours restoring over the past two years.

Once an impenetrable thicket of invasive buckthorn, the area is now clear—and Land Conservation Committee Co-chair Catherine Delasco and property steward Paul Repasy are committed to keeping it

that way.

As you walk through the fields today, the changes are visible. A large brush pile provides shelter for small animals. Goldenrod, blueberry, winterberry and other native shrubs and wildflowers are buzzing with bees and butterflies.

The dead trees left standing are nesting sites for birds, roosts for bats and raptors, and a food source for insects. And the young sycamores have the light, air, and space they need to thrive.

At Stout Family Fields, the legacy of the Pinchot Sycamore lives on, thanks to those committed to preserving the land's natural beauty and fostering new native life. Thank you, members and volunteers!



*The legendary Pinchot Sycamore, named after Gifford Pinchot, an ardent environmental preservationist who was born in Simsbury in 1865.*



## Contributor Spotlight

### Yvonne Espinoza: Cultivating Connection, Community, and Conservation

**Y**vonne Espinoza has spent her life blending art and ecology. A 25-year resident of West Hartford, she runs her own marketing consultancy, but her heart has always been rooted in the natural world.

Her curiosity has led her down many interesting paths. In recent years, she has explored environmental, social, and governance (ESG) tools that measure an organization's commitment to sustainability.

She has studied ecotones—the transitional zones where ecosystems meet, like

grasslands and forests or freshwater and the sea—and the hardy “pioneering species” that help ecosystems resist invasive threats.

Now a student in Connecticut's Master Woodland Manager Program, Yvonne is learning about forest systems and how to build resilience in both people and nature.

To her, resilience isn't just about surviving change; it's about expanding our sense of community to include rivers, trees, and wildlife, and learning how to “listen” in ways that honor all living things.

Yvonne's connection with land conservation began in 2020 with a community effort to save a West Hartford UConn property from development. Though the effort didn't succeed, it inspired her involvement with local land trusts.

In summer 2025, she joined TRLC and began attending work parties, helping to cut back

invasive species crowding out oaks and other natives so they can thrive.

“Trees are working hard,” Yvonne says. “I should help them. I'm their ally when I'm there to clear out invasives, and they're our allies in our communities. It's a kind of sharing: that's what we do with neighbors, we help out.”

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Her reasons for volunteering are twofold: to make a tangible difference in the natural world, and to inspire herself to tend her own garden at home. Her work with TRLC reflects her larger philosophy: that humans and nature thrive together, and true resilience honors those connections.

“Together, we are a movement,” she says. “We have to deprogram ourselves from the idea that we are working alone.”

## Celebrating a Year of Achievement

**O**n September 14, 2025, more than 90 TRLC members and guests gathered for an evening of celebration at Wintonbury Hills Golf Course in Bloomfield.

The event was filled with music, stories, and reflections that recognized a year of conservation achievements and community engagement.



Highlights included:

- **The story of Wojan Woods**, a West Hartford micro-forest newly restored with more than 200 native plants and trees.
- **An introduction to forest bathing**, the mindful practice of connecting with the woods through all the senses. Look for a guided experience on our fall calendar.

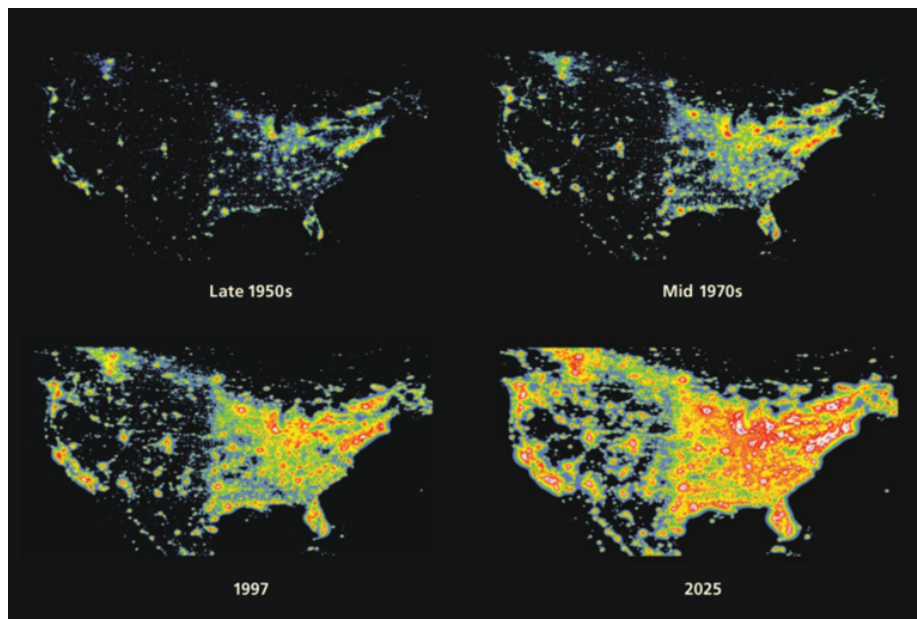


• **A moving vocal performance of *It's a Wonderful World* by Bloomfield Mayor Anthony Harrington.** We are deeply grateful to our community partners that generously contributed more than \$5,000 to TRLC. And a heartfelt thank you to our members and guests whose presence and enthusiasm made the evening enjoyable for all.





## Help Connecticut's Migratory Birds: Dim Your Lights this Fall



*Simulated brightness due to light pollution in the U.S. from the late 1950s to today. The areas with the greatest light pollution—the Atlantic and Central corridors—correspond to the flyways with the largest numbers of migrating birds.*

Every year, millions of birds pass through Connecticut during the peak migration seasons: mid-March to mid-June and mid-August to mid-November. Many travel at night, sometimes thousands of miles, using the natural light from stars and the moon to guide their way.

Artificial lights, including street lights, building exteriors and interior lighting shining out through windows, can disorient them and take them off course, causing exhaustion and deadly collisions with buildings.

In 2023, Connecticut took a big step to protect migrating birds by unanimously passing the “Lights Out” Law (Act 23-143). This bill requires state buildings to dim nonessential outdoor lights after

11 p.m. year-round to protect birds. We can all play a part in this effort.

By taking a few simple steps year-round to dim lights (see at right), you’ll not only help save birds—you’ll also help other wildlife, including the fireflies that light up the night from mid-June through mid-July.

Artificial light disrupts their mating signals and can take away the dark habitats they need to survive.

We hope you’ll join the Lights Out Connecticut movement—to help protect our night skies and millions of birds and fireflies each year. Take the Lights Out Pledge at [www.lightsoutct.org/pledge](http://www.lightsoutct.org/pledge). And to track bird migration this fall, including your favorite species, visit the Audubon Bird Migration Explorer: [explorer.audubon.org](http://explorer.audubon.org).

### How to Be Dark Sky-Friendly

As millions of birds are migrating south right now:

- Dim or turn off unnecessary lights from 10 p.m. until dawn.
- Use timers and motion detectors to switch off lights when they’re not needed.
- Close blinds or curtains near windows, especially in high-rise buildings.
- Use lighting fixtures that are shielded or downward-facing.
- Choose warmer-color lights (white or yellow, not blue, 2700 Kelvins or less) and the minimum brightness needed.

### Light Pollution Affects Us All

While light pollution poses serious risks to birds, it also impacts people:

- Nearly 80% of people worldwide can no longer see the Milky Way where they live.
- Excessive outdoor lighting wastes billions of dollars in energy every year.
- Artificial light at night disrupts circadian rhythms, affecting our sleep and overall health.
- Skyglow from cities can be seen for hundreds of miles, affecting rural and wilderness areas.

**The good news:** The simple changes listed above can help make a big difference for wildlife and people alike.



## Traprock Ridge Land Conservancy

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**OUR MISSION:** *To protect open space and promote public appreciation of the natural environment across the region.*



## Fall Calendar

### Weekday Hike

**October 8, 9:30 a.m.**

West Hartford Reservoirs  
1420 Farmington Avenue  
West Hartford

### Guided Forest Therapy Experience

**October 11, 10–12 p.m.**

Stout Family Fields/Penwood Park  
Stone Hill Road, Bloomfield

### Over the Mountain Hike

**November 1, 9 a.m.**

Parking lot at corner of Iron Horse  
Blvd and Drake Hill Road, Simsbury

### Poop Museum

**November 15, 10:30–11:30 a.m.**

East Granby High School Auditorium  
(fun for both kids and adults)

### YOU'RE INVITED!

## Wojan Woods Woodland Restoration Celebration

**134 Davenport Road**

**West Hartford**

**Sunday, October 5, 1–3 p.m.**



Join us for a community event showcasing the new trails and native plantings within this 2.75-acre micro-forest tucked away in a West Hartford neighborhood.

- Brief presentation at 1:30, acknowledging the many dedicated volunteers who made Wojan Woods' transformation possible
- Light refreshments
- Guided walks

**Parking:** Davenport Road (north of Barton Street), Wolcott Road or Wolcott School parking lot

**Hope to see you there!**

**For more details and the latest TRLC events, visit [trlandconservancy.org](http://trlandconservancy.org).**