

The Ridgeline

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For the Love of the Land

The story behind Stout Family Fields, a TRLC preserve since 2012



John and Lisa Stout in their backyard with Stout Family Fields stretching behind them.

On a quiet expanse of fields bordered by woods and sky, John Stout has spent a lifetime seeing the land change – and thankfully stay the same.

Now 85, John and his wife, Lisa, still live on the Bloomfield property his parents purchased in 1952, a 50-acre stretch along Duncaster Road from Gun Mill Road to Stone Hill Road, bordering Penwood State Park.

The land has served many purposes: a small tobacco field in the 1950s, pasture for cattle, patches of corn, and space for children to roam. There were also Lisa’s horses, ponies for a summer day camp, and even a motorcycle track John carved out in his younger days.

John’s mother, Frances, was a devoted birder and gardener who loved the land and walked it often.

“She wanted it to stay as it is,” John recalls. “She certainly hoped it would not get developed.”

In the 1970s, the family briefly considered subdividing. John built a post-and-beam home on the property and held an open house, but their prospective buyers didn’t seem like the right fit. His parents, who hadn’t lived on the property until then, moved in themselves, keeping the land intact.

Years later, after Frances’s passing, John and his siblings honored her vision. In 2012, through a transaction negotiated with the Wintonbury Land Trust, now part of TRLC, the 13 acres bordering Penwood were conserved. Today the land remains open, preserved for generations to come.

Those same fields now rise behind

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Funding Sources for Land Conservation

- **State programs**, such as Connecticut DEEP grants.
- **Federal programs**, including the USDA Grassland Reserve Program.
- **Regional conservation funds** supporting land protection.
- **Private foundations, nonprofits, local support, individual donors.**

Most projects combine several sources to make conservation possible.





Early Greens, Hidden Threats

Managing Invasive Plants

In spring, we look forward to forsythia, daffodils, and the first tender leaves on the trees. We love these signs of new life and warmer days, but much of what greens up first isn't native. It's invasive plants quietly spreading through our landscapes.

Connecticut has about 2,800 plant species, and roughly 1,800 are native. Of the rest, 102 are identified as invasive by the Connecticut Invasive Plants Council. Invasive species are the second-largest threat to global biodiversity, surpassed only by habitat loss and the fragmentation of natural spaces into smaller, disconnected areas.

Invasive plants spread aggressively, displacing the native species that wildlife depends on. Many insects rely on native plants to survive, and those insects in turn feed birds and other wildlife. In fact, 96 percent of songbirds depend on insects to feed their young. When native plants decline, insects decline – and the effects ripple outward.

Some invasive plants also cause direct harm. **Oriental bittersweet** is a woody vine that can strangle trees. **Tree of heaven** releases chemicals into the soil that keep other plants from growing, and also hosts the

spotted lanternfly, an invasive insect harming farms and forests.

Taking on invasive plants can feel overwhelming, but every cleared area, no matter how small, makes a difference. TRLC Board Member Catherine Delasco leads volunteer work days on protected properties – an easy way for anyone to get involved.

You can help in your yard, too. Early spring is an ideal time to address these plants, pictured here:

- Pull **garlic mustard** and **Japanese stiltgrass** before they go to seed.
- Cut woody invasives like **bittersweet, Japanese barberry, and burning bush** before they leaf out. Where allowed, painting a cut stump with an herbicide such as triclopyr can prevent regrowth.
- Cut **Japanese knotweed**. This invasive requires persistence: cutting early and often is key.

We may never eliminate invasive plants entirely, but every effort counts. Restoring even a small area to native vegetation strengthens Connecticut's web of natural life.

Helpful Resources

- Simsbury Land Trust's invasives booklet (simsburylandtrust.org).
- Connecticut Invasive Plant Working Group (cipwg.uconn.edu).

From Interns to Advocates

Honoring Three Seniors for Their Outreach and Stewardship

This spring, TRLC celebrates three East Granby High School seniors as they complete their final season as interns. Over the past two years, they've served on committees and the board, led educational programs for younger students, and cared for TRLC properties, removing invasives and stewarding the land.

TRLC's ongoing internship program gives students a hands-on way to make a meaningful difference, showing that even small actions matter in a world of environmental challenges. Interns gain leadership skills, environmental literacy, and a sense of responsibility for the land, while learning that conservation isn't just for science majors – it's everyone's job.

"I hope this program helped each of the interns see the value of giving their time to a worthy cause," says TRLC President Amanda Thompson, "and possibly some sense of control in an otherwise chaotic world."

Their work has benefited TRLC and the community, and inspired them to become part of a new generation of conservation advocates.

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world: indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.

–Margaret Mead



Varshny Sriganesh

Role: Education Committee and stewardship.

College focus: Mechanical engineering, with interest in the ethics around protecting nature.

What she liked most: Leading outdoor programs for elementary and middle school students.

Quote: "I like giving back to the community. I really appreciate TRLC's mission to preserve nature and help species thrive."



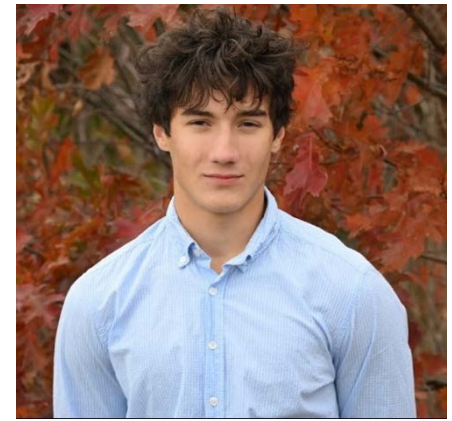
Sree Kolla

Role: Education Committee and stewardship.

College focus: Biology / biochemistry, preparing for a future in the medical field.

What she liked most: Working face-to-face in a professional setting, learning how a land trust operates.

Quote: "It's great to experience nature and diversity, but if we don't protect it, future generations won't be able to experience it."



Sebi Prescott

Role: Finance Committee, educational programs, stewardship.

College focus: Engineering with a minor or double major in finance.

What he liked most: Hands-on engagement, especially property maintenance and work parties to remove invasive species.

Quote: "I'll definitely have an eye open for the environment and our relationship with it, bringing that into my studies and future thinking."

For the Love of the Land

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John and Lisa's home. A stream runs through them. Trails lead around the property and to the forest beyond, offering a back way into Penwood. Visitors pass through

daily – 20-40 on a nice day, according to John, walking dogs, hiking, and snowshoeing in winter.

"I'm happy to see it," John says. "I don't want to have a field with no one on it."

For the Stouts, there is joy in

knowing the land will be preserved and cared for. TRLC volunteers and neighbors maintain the property, ensuring the grassland stays healthy and open.

"We did it for our mother – and for us," John says.



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.*



Spring Calendar

TRLC 2026 Annual Meeting

April 21, 6:30–8 p.m.

East Granby Community Center
9 Center St, East Granby

Featuring a presentation on automated mapping of beaver activity and its environmental impacts in Connecticut.



HIKES

April 18, 10 a.m.

Wilcox Park Hike
46 Hoskins Rd, Bloomfield
Rain date: April 19, 2 p.m.

May 13, 10 a.m.

Ethel Walker Woods Hike
86 Town Forest Road, Simsbury

June 7, 10 a.m.

Forest bathing family hike for
CT Trails Day
Details coming soon

WORK PARTIES

April 19, 1–3 p.m.

Privilege Preserve, Bloomfield
Trash pickup

April 22, 1–3 p.m.

Earth Day Work Party
University of St. Joseph, 1678
Asylum Ave, West Hartford

April 25, 10 a.m.–12 p.m.

Notable Tree Trail Work Party
Hawk Hill Farm
20 Duncaster Rd, Bloomfield

Your support is more than a gift. It's a lasting investment in land, water, and wildlife for future generations.

To make a contribution:

- Donate. You can give online at trlandconservancy.org or mail a check payable to Traprock Ridge Land Conservancy, P.O. Box 734, Bloomfield, CT 06002.
- Volunteer your time. Volunteers are essential to our work, and a way to contribute directly to protecting the places you love.

For questions about volunteering or other ways to donate, contact Executive Director Kathy Blachowski at (860) 251-9650 or director@trlandconservancy.org.

Thank you.

For more details and the latest TRLC events, visit trlandconservancy.org.