

Community Conservation SPOTLIGHT

Engaging Elders...

By 2040, the number of Americans ages 65 and older is predicted to outnumber children for the first time in U.S. history. That trend is expected to continue with elders projected to comprise nearly 24 percent of the total population by 2060. Doctors and caregivers know that continuing joyful experiences, and staying active later in life, is important for maintaining cognitive, emotional and physical health.

This *Spotlight* shares examples of land trusts that recognize that as people age in their communities they need new ways to connect with the lands and waters they love. With an aging population, and the need to serve people from all walks of life, you might consider how your land trust can find ways to help elders connect to the places, experiences and memories they cherish.

Access to the Outdoors

Genesee Land Trust*—NY

The Thomas R. Frey Trail at El Camino is a rail-trail owned by the city that has become more than a trail. Now it's a popular walking and biking venue in one of Rochester's more economically stressed neighborhoods that connects people to the outdoors and to each other.

Under the leadership of a local nurse, El Camino became the home base for Conkey Cruisers, a creative neighborhood bicycling, fitness and health program that inspires neighborhood youth and elders to get outside and exercise to develop a healthy lifestyle. It also builds community recognition and pride.

It is also the setting for Genesee Land Trust's Apprentice Program providing a first summer job for youth focused on conservation and stewardship of the trail, and El Camino Play, a summer program for youth with games, arts and free lunches supervised by neighborhood volunteers and Project HOPE staff.

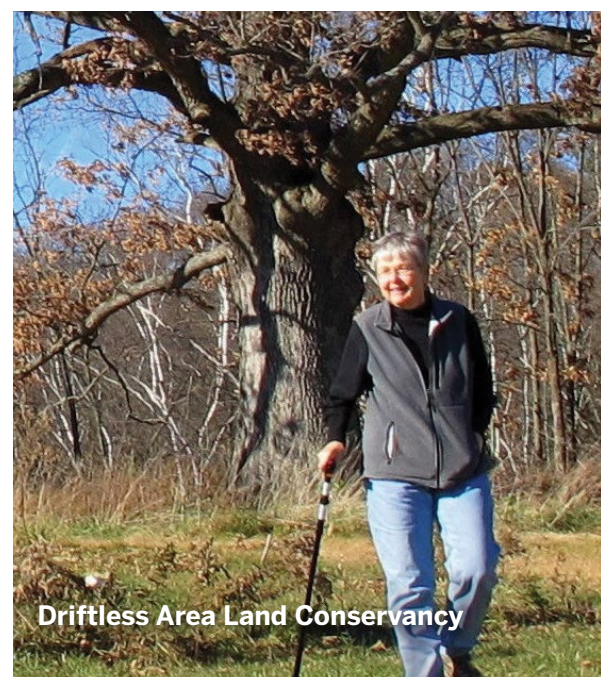
- Partners: Conkey Cruisers, Ibero-American Action League, Project HOPE, City of Rochester
- Staff: 3.5 FTE | All involved in programming
- geneseeandtrust.org

Driftless Area Land Conservancy*—WI

Providing complementary programs designed for elders to experience area farms and wildlife areas is part of the community work of the land trust. The programs include taking tractor/wagon rides, walks along trails compatible with mobility challenges and/or programs indoors.

In addition, the land trust provides programs free of charge related to planned giving and conservation options. "We believe that access to nature, farms and the out-of-doors is important in all stages of life. Many of our members love that we do this," notes Dave Clutter, executive director.

- Staff: 5.5 FTE | .75 FTE for programs
- driftlessconservancy.org



Hilltown Land Trust — MA

Hilltown Land Trust partners with a local organization, All Out Adventures (AOA), to host events/programs that get people with mobility challenges outside in a fun, safe and interactive manner. AOA's mission is to "promote health, community and independence for people with disabilities and their family and friends through outdoor recreation."

"It's outstanding; people see us—and conservation—in a whole new way," said Katie Carr, TerraCorps community engagement coordinator.

- Partner: All Out Adventures, alloutadventures.org
- Staff: .75 FTE, 2 TerraCorps members
- hilltown-land-trust.org

"The partnership fostered discussions about accessibility and what we can do differently to better serve the needs of everyone in our community."

— Katie Carr, TerraCorps community engagement coordinator

Wintonbury Land Trust — CT

A 140-acre open space owned by the Town of Bloomfield comprised of farm, forest and pastures is adjacent to Duncaster Retirement Community.

Ironwood Community Partners and the Wintonbury Land Trust (WLT) are promoting a $\frac{3}{4}$ -mile universally accessible trail system on this open space with the goal of connecting Duncaster residents to the 140-acre parcel and other WLT properties through linking trails.

- Partners: Duncaster Retirement Community, Ironwood Community Partners
- All-volunteer land trust
- wintonburylandtrust.org



Enhanced Accessibility

Windmill Hill Pinnacle Association—VT

The land trust hosts an annual “Accessibility Day” for those who otherwise would be unable to reach the views and/or summit of the Pinnacle (part of a 2,000-acre ridgeline conservation project by the group). For adults who have difficulty walking, this is the chance to visit—perhaps with a grandchild or friend—a spot that would have been otherwise impossible.

A local auto dealership provides a four-wheel drive vehicle, and board members provide other appropriate vehicles to navigate access to the logging and/or rough access road to a lookout point. Others bring food and drinks.

- Partners: Local car dealership, volunteers
- All-volunteer land trust
- windmillhillpinnacle.org

“This is one of our most popular programs. It’s a great way to show we care.” — Tony Coven, board member, program leader,

Windmill Hill Pinnacle Association

Santa Fe Conservation Trust* —NM

An inclusive community stakeholder process urged the land trust to use its legacy of trail work to benefit a wide range of community groups.

As a result the land trust and its partners created a series of walks for different constituents.

With the help of the City’s Americans with Disabilities Act coordinator and wellness coordinator, they arranged a special monthly walk for seniors and those with disabilities who can’t or don’t get out very often, which connects them to the outdoors and to each other.

- Partners: City of Santa Fe, many others
- Staff: 4 FTE | 1 FTE for program
- sfct.org



Bring the Outside Indoors

Audubon Society—Centers and Chapters in CT, MD, TX, WY

Audubon groups and other wildlife organizations are working to provide programming to elder homes and facilities in a manner that enriches the lives of those who live there. In today's nursing homes and assisted living facilities, more than half the residents may have some level of Alzheimer's disease or other dementia and struggle to stay connected to their surroundings.

"Nature is one of our best medicines," said Audubon President and CEO David Yarnold. "The Bird Tales program brings peace and joy to people living with dementia by connecting them with the healing power of birds. And at the same time, by encouraging facilities managers to create bird-friendly habitats, the program gives birds a boost, too."

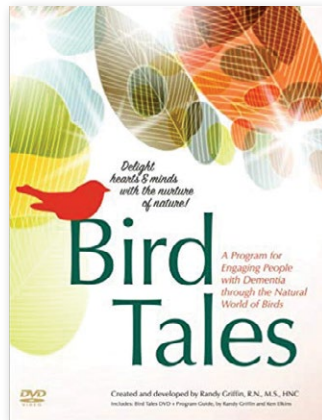
Research has documented that birds, particularly the sounds of birds, can benefit Alzheimer's patients and those facing cognitive decline.

Ken Elkins, education programs manager for the Audubon Center Bent of the River in Connecticut, trains people throughout the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom. He looks forward to working with additional land trusts.

Staff or volunteers bring photos, songs, stuffed birds or "ambassador birds" to the elder homes; programs also work with the facilities to develop outdoor garden areas for nature watching.

- Partners: Elder-home facilities, healthcare providers, Audubon chapters, local Alzheimer's Association, Bird Conservancy of the Rockies
- Staff and volunteers
- Audubon contact: Ken Elkins, kelkins@audubon.org
- ct.audubon.org/bird-tales

For land trusts interested in replicating the program, a new guidebook is available: *Bird Tales: A Program for Engaging People with Dementia through the Natural World of Birds*.



Delaware Valley Raptor Center –
Milford, PA



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Faith and Retirement Communities

Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy* — MI

The Bow in the Clouds property got its name from the donors—the Sisters of the Congregation of St. Joseph—who reference the rainbow after the Great Flood, as a promise to care for the Earth.

The Sisters turned it over to Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy (SWMLC) because they were getting older and were concerned for its long-term stewardship. SWMLC has been working with them and diverse partners on habitat management and improving access for the Sisters and many others in the community.

- Partners: Sisters of the Congregation of St. Joseph, several youth based nonprofits in Kalamazoo's eastside neighborhood, other volunteers
- Staff: 7 FTE, 2 PTE | 2 FTE for program
- swmlc.org

“Providing access to connect to nature, for all ages, is part of our work and legacy.”

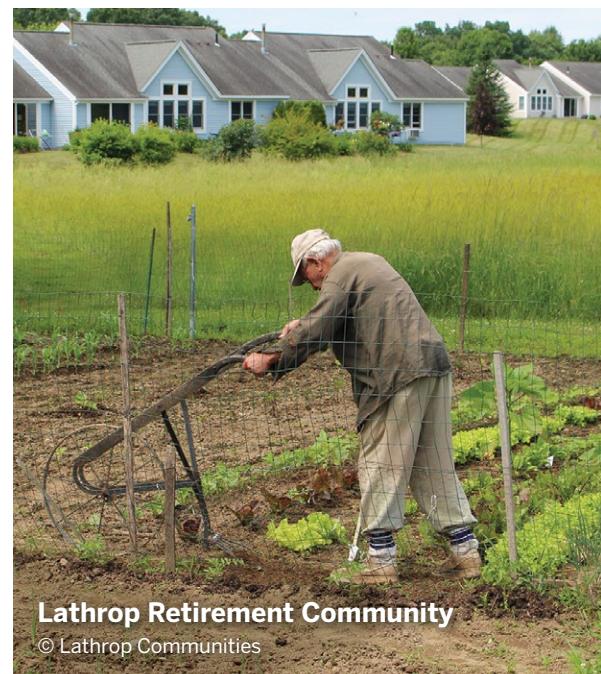
— Peter D. Ter Louw, SWMLC Executive Director

Kestrel Land Trust* — MA

Kestrel Land Trust is collaborating with active elders at two retirement communities in the Pioneer Valley of Massachusetts: Lathrop and Applewood.

So far programs with residents have included creating garden beds, removing invasive species, planting trees, birding at breakfast and even gentle yoga. Kestrel hopes to engage these older folks in the protection of open space close to home, as part of a network of conservation lands across the region that are welcoming to all ages and all abilities.

- Partners: Lathrop and Applewood retirement communities
- Staff: 7 FTE
- kestreltrust.org



End-of-Life Planning

Conservation and Green Burial

There are many elders and their families that want to consider how their end-of-life planning reflects their values. Just as estate planning is helpful for many, now increasingly is the option of finding a final resting place that is beautiful and cares for the land. As a result, a growing number of land trusts are considering how they can support, or undertake, green burial programs.



The Wilderness Center, Foxfield Preserve—OH

Foxfield Preserve is a nonprofit conservation burial ground operated by The Wilderness Center, a nonprofit nature center and land trust. This project was the first nature preserve cemetery in Ohio and the first in the nation operated by a conservation organization.

Beyond allowing a burial free of embalming chemicals and without the need for concrete vaults and steel caskets, Foxfield Preserve also restores natural land for future generations to enjoy. Functioning as a nature preserve first, it provides the community with the legacy of a beautiful retreat and a refuge for wildlife.

Burial at Foxfield Preserve supports the mission of The Wilderness Center, which connects the community with nature, educates people of all ages, conserves natural resources and practices land stewardship.

- Staff: 8 FTE, 8 PTE | 1 FTE, 1 PTE to manage Foxfield Preserve
- foxfieldpreserve.org

“I was struck immediately with the ‘rightness’ of the [conservation burial] concept. It sounded perfect!”

— Marge Thomas, Wilderness Center member

Alachua Conservation Trust* —FL

Alachua Conservation Trust partnered with Conservation Burial Inc. to create a natural burial ground within the land trust’s Prairie Creek Preserve. Prairie Creek Conservation Cemetery is a fully licensed cemetery that uses its burial fees to reinvest in land acquisition, protection, restoration and management.

- Staff: 9 FTE | 2 FTE, 2 PTE for Conservation Cemetery
- alachuaconservationtrust.org

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For additional information on possible partnerships, the pros and cons, costs, skills and land needed for Green and/or Conservation Burial Grounds see:

Green Burial Council
greenburialcouncil.org

LANDMATTERS
thelandmatters.com

Better Place Forests
betterplaceforests.com

Six Tips for Engaging Elders

- 1. Research has documented that outdoor experiences, close to home,** are important for everyone; these experiences can be even more helpful as people age and have fewer resources or ability to travel farther away to experience nature, farms and ranches.
- 2. Assess what outdoor experiences in your community are available to elders** at different stages of their lives, interests and cultures. Look for what might prevent them from experiencing the lands and waters they love.
- 3. Find out what people need.** Talk to elders who are not participating in your programs or outdoor spaces; brainstorm with organizations serving the elderly; consider inter-generational access and programs.

Don't make assumptions about people's capacity, interest or way they would like to interact with the outdoors.
- 4. Enhance specific trails and programs** for different mobility levels. Elders, as well as others, may want to bring other people, or dogs, with them for company and safety. People with strollers, those with mobility challenges or medical conditions can also benefit from all-access trails.

Plan for resting spots, surface materials and interpretive signage appropriate to visitors.
- 5. Consider ways to bring the "outside in" like** the Audubon Program described in this *Spotlight*.
- 6. Evaluate the role of volunteers;** consider possible partnerships and how they might expand your capacity and impact. If you do use volunteers or partners, recognize that these programs are relationship-based—you are using conservation as a tool to enrich lives and learn about those you are serving. Be sure to capture personal impact stories.

Interested in other tips, examples, and suggestions?

Go to the Land Trust Alliance's website at www.lta.org/community-conservation

Do you have a program or project to spotlight? Email communityconservation@lta.org

“People will forget what you said. People will forget what you did. But people will never forget how you made them feel.”

—Maya Angelou



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www.landtrustalliance.org

Join the conversation

Community Conservation Learning Network forum on the Learning Center
<https://tlc.lta.org/CCLNforum>

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*Denotes accredited land trust. See landtrustaccreditation.org