



Highlands-Cashiers LAND TRUST

"Saving Special Places since 1909"

Winter 2010-11

Donation Helps Protect Historic Kelsey Trail

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The mission of the Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust is to protect valuable land resources for all generations.



This photograph of picnickers on the Kelsey Trail, taken around 1909, is from the Harbison Collection of Tammy Lowe. Courtesy of the Highlands Historical Society.

A STRATEGIC LAND DONATION by Tommy and Vickie Chambers will help protect a portion of the historic Kelsey Trail.

The Land Trust owns and stewards a section of the trail at the end of Fifth Street in Highlands. This tract protects all that officially remains of the trail that once led to Whiteside Mountain. The Land Trust protects the western side of the trail at the end of Fifth Street. The donation by the Chambers will help to protect trail along the eastern edge as well.

The Kelsey Trail was constructed by Highlands citizens and Samuel Kelsey in 1883. The four-and-a-half-mile trail started at the end of Fifth Street in Highlands and ended at the Cherokee Camp-

ground at Whiteside Mountain. It was a popular route through an incredible old growth forest to picnic and camping spots on Whiteside. For a great read about the Kelsey Trail pick up a copy of Bob Zahner's *Mountain at the End of the Trail*.

The modern day Kelsey Trail is part of the Highlands Greenway network. The land donation by the Chambers will provide an easement across a portion of their property, allowing the construction of a connector trail from the Kelsey Trail to a new greenway trail in Rhododendron Park on Bear Pen Mountain.

The Land Trust thanks Tommy and Vickie Chambers for this very significant contribution.



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By Thomas Bates
President, HCLT

Tyranny of the Not-So-Urgent

IT HAPPENS EVERY YEAR, especially around the holidays. You name the distraction: shopping, parties, parades, football games, or, much as we may try to avoid them, taxes. No matter how well we may try to plan ahead, distractions come in various shapes, sizes and flavors, and something “urgent” always seems to raise its head to steal our attention and time.

What’s true in life is also true in the realm of land conservation. As much as we, your Land Trust, may plan and prioritize, we too can become so easily distracted by the more mundane yet pressing items and activities that whine for our attention. Meetings, fundraisers, conferences, phone calls, and even newsletters, serve their purposes, but they can also easily distract us from our *primary* purpose: the protection of valuable land resources.

Combine the everyday distractions with the fact that we are permanently losing some of our most precious natural resources to various forms of development at an alarming

rate, and we have the makings of a real dilemma. Combine this rapid rate of change with the recent downturn in real estate, and the dilemma can quickly erode into disaster. Lower land prices open the door for less scrupulous development by effectively lowering the purchase price for possible permanent changes to these mountains that we all hold so dear.

No, the sky is not falling. Oh, that it were! Maybe then we would pay closer attention to all that we are at risk of losing forever. Change is often easy to

No, the sky is not falling.
Oh, that it were!

disregard, especially when other matters occupy our minds and immediate priorities. But if we fail to act soon to preserve and protect our most valuable natural resources — the vistas, the rivers, the ridges, the meadows and the many other places of matchless beauty that attracted us here in the first place — these hallowed places will soon be limited to distant memories that our grandchildren will only be able to describe to their children.

So, during this season of gratitude and celebration, let’s take a moment to reevaluate our priorities. Look out your window and redefine *urgency* to include those things (or places) of more eternal value and beauty, and commit yourself to them. Your support of the Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust is always deeply appreciated, especially now.

Stones of Remembrance

By Kathie Wyatt Blozan

WE BROUGHT THREE SOUVENIR STONES HOME. One is heavy, black basalt. The sandstone has markings of a heart-shaped cat's face. The third is feldspar, and it resembles a stale biscuit.

The Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust eco-tour with Gary Wein ended with lunch on Bob Dodd's deck which, on September 16, 2004, overlooked the aftermath of the event that killed five people in less than ten minutes. Geologists call it a "debris flow." Although there is plenty of water and mud involved, the primary killer is the stuff the rampaging torrent gathers in its path: boulders, trees, and building materials.

A feeling of reverence filled the spaces of the day as geologist Rick Wooten reminded the ten of us that our hiking boots were walking on hallowed ground beside Peek's Creek near Franklin, North Carolina. We made several stops as we bounced up Fishhawk Mountain in four wheel drive vehicles. Using huge laminated charts, graphs, and infrared satellite photos, Rick explained rock exfoliation, slope angles, and the equation used in calculating the velocity of boulders thundering down the creek, taking houses, trees, bodies and body parts. The rocks are at rest now, as are the lost lives.

That September night, Mrs. Treadwell, sitting in her living room, heard the phone ringing in the back of the house. As she was answering it, the front of her home was ravaged by rock and debris. The elderly woman's place happened to be at the spot where the rampaging creek took a sharp left, and a mountain of rubble had pushed it off its foundation. She was later rescued by a neighbor.

Members of The Dills family were crowded into Debbie Dills' home. They were watching movies to pass the time during the rainy evening. Having traveled from Florida to escape Hurricane Ivan, some were there because their friends had encouraged them to come on up; that, in the mountains, they'd be safe from the hurricane. Rather than staying for movie night with the rest of the family, the grandparents decided to turn in early, and they headed on down the hill to the summer trailer by the creek. Sadly, the couple perished that night in the deluge.

Pinned under a wood stove, a man endured

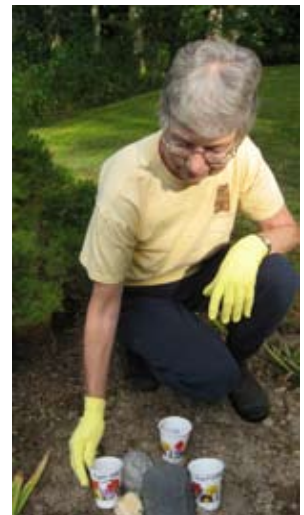
several long hours and was rescued by neighbors. He lost his leg.

Another man left for his job on the night shift and noticed how high the creek had risen. He returned to the house just in time to get his family to higher ground.

Bob Dodd was not home that night. His house was completely wiped out, along with 14 others. He now lives in a new home — the one with the view of Peek's Creek where, after the eco-tour, we enjoyed a picnic lunch. A compassionate man, he accompanied us up the mountain and, at each stopping place, brought insight into the lives of those who had died and those who had survived. The debris flow took out the bridge just below Bob's home and finally stopped just short of a white farmhouse and old barn a couple hundred yards from that bridge. It had roared from near the top of Fishhawk Mountain into the valley, devastating two and a half miles in less than ten minutes.

While four-wheeling up Fishhawk Mountain toward the source of the flow, I noticed the abundance of wildflowers, especially sunflowers and black-eyed Susans. Six years ago they would have bloomed along the edge of the destruction. I gathered seeds. Five were killed that night, including a baby, yet unborn, whose mother survived. On September 16, 2010, my husband Carl and I prepared a Peek's Creek Memorial Garden in our yard, using the seeds and the three stones of remembrance.

Kathie Blozan arranges sunflower and black-eyed Susan seeds for planting in her Peek's Creek Memorial Garden with the three stones of remembrance gathered from the site of the debris flow. Photo by Carl Blozan



Stewardship Notes

Introducing HCLT's Stewardship Coordinator

For those of you who have not met me already, my name is Kyle Pursel, and I will be working with the Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust as the stewardship coordinator, through the AmeriCorps Project Conserve program, until the end of July 2011.

I first heard about the Land Trust through Western Carolina University, where I am currently working on my Master's thesis in biology on how rhododendron affects salamanders. Before going to WCU, I worked along the eastern shores of Lake Ontario in New York studying various turtle species, and I obtained my B.S. in zoology from SUNY Oswego. I grew up in the central Appalachians in northwestern New Jersey, where my fondness for salamanders and conservation first took root.

I have thoroughly enjoyed working with the Land Trust and look forward to meeting you all in the coming months. I would enjoy answering any questions you have such as identifying salamanders on your property or snake issues.



Living with Power Line Rights-of-Way

For some of you, a conservation easement is not the only easement you have on your property. Power line rights-of-way or ROW's as they are sometimes called, are common in many areas, and occasionally cross through private property via easement rights-of-way. ROW's require regular maintenance to prevent vegetation from shorting out power lines or even causing fires. Power companies are allowed to maintain their ROW's for that purpose, even in areas covered by a conservation easement.

In the areas covered by HCLT, there are two power companies that maintain ROW's: Haywood EMC and the town of Highlands. Both have a rotational schedule of maintenance for their ROW's. Haywood EMC herbicides its ROW's about every three years and does side trimming every eight to ten years. Highlands physically cuts and trims its ROW's about every five years. Both will also do "hot spotting" work, going into an area not scheduled for maintenance to fix an outage or other problem that has arisen between scheduled maintenance visits. Haywood EMC herbicides using backpack sprayers with a low-volume, EPA-approved herbicide, which is the method commonly used by many other power companies.

While the process of maintaining a power line right-of-way may seem destructive, numerous scientific studies have shown that properly maintained ROW's, including those treated with

herbicides, will increase the overall biodiversity of forested landscapes by providing more open space habitats for various annual flowers and other plant and animal species that prefer such open spaces.

The Land Trust is currently working on strengthening our relationships with the local power companies to ensure that the power line rights-of-way located on properties where we have conservation easements are properly maintained. Both Haywood EMC and the town of Highlands encourage you to contact them with any questions or concerns you may have. If you live in Jackson County contact Les Griffin of Haywood EMC at 828-926-4470. If you live in or around Highlands, contact Lamar Nix at 828-536-5266 or LamarNix@HighlandsNC.org.



A Tale of Two Cousins

By Gary Wein, Executive Director, HCLT

During December, thoughts of “chestnuts roasting on an open fire” come to mind. We have two native chestnuts that used to fit that bill: chinkapin (chinquapin) and the American chestnut.

The chinquapin (*Castanea pumila*) is a small understory tree or shrub and is a relative of the once dominant American chestnut (*Castanea dentata*). This species is found from Texas to New York and south to Florida and is scattered throughout North Carolina. One of the first descriptions of the chinquapin was by Captain John Smith who in 1612 noted the Native Americans found the acorn-sized fruit a great “daintie.” The Cherokee found the leaves of the chinquapin to be a good analgesic, a cure for fever blisters, chills and sweats, and stomach problems. The seeds can be eaten raw or baked like a potato and have a sweet, nutty taste.

The chinquapin’s cousin, the American chestnut, also sets fruits this time of year and can occasionally be found. All that remains of these forest giants are a very few scattered remnant trees and some spindly stump sprouts. At one time, this large tree dominated the forests of the Appalachians and still is found in every state



“Julie’s Bench” on the trail to Sunrise Rock.

east of the Mississippi River. This species was destroyed by a fungus introduced into the Bronx in 1904, and within 40 years nearly three billion trees were wiped out. In response to the blight both live trees and dead trees were harvested. This tree was so dominant in our forests that our mountains looked yellow in the spring; this gave rise to descriptive names such as our Yellow Mountain.

The leaves of the American chestnut are toothed and easily distinguishable from those of the chinquapin. The nuts of the American chestnut are also twice the size of its smaller cousin and provided an incredible bounty for the wildlife, Native Americans of eastern North America, and later, newcomers to the new world — the Europeans.



Chinquapin, *Castanea pumila*



American chestnut,
Castanea dentata

To learn more about the biological diversity of western North Carolina and your local land trust’s conservation efforts contact us at www.hicashlt.org.

Highland Hiker Supports Local Non-Profits

Between December 1–25, 2010, the Highland Hiker will allow anyone who makes a purchase at their stores in Highlands and Cashiers to designate a local non-profit to receive 2% of their sale.

2009 Audubon Award Received



The Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust was named an **Audubon Honorary Warden** by Audubon North Carolina. This award is given to

an organization or individual that epitomizes the spirit of the Audubon wardens who once patrolled and enforced game laws.

The Land Trust now protects well over two thousand acres on and around the Highlands Plateau.



Blue Ridge Forever Named Land Conservationist of the Year

Blue Ridge Forever, a coalition of nine regional land trusts including HCLT, was recipient of the NC Wildlife Federation 2009 Governor’s Conservation Achievement Award as the **Land Conservationist of the Year**.

Since its formation in 2003 this coalition has led a campaign to raise public awareness and financial resources to safeguard land and water in the Southern Blue Ridge. The Coalition will have reached its goal of protecting 50,000 acres in five years by years end. HCLT contributed more than 30 properties to this goal.

Join us on Facebook
Keep up to date on upcoming events and HCLT happenings on HCLT’s Facebook page! Become a fan and suggest that your friends become a fan today.

2010 Land Donations and Easements

- Located on the East Fork of Savannah Creek, this site protects 220 acres of rich and diverse mixed oak forest. The tract borders Nantahala National Forestlands and has numerous unimpacted streams. Historically the site may also have been the path the retreating Cherokee took to escape Rutherford’s militia during the 1776 expedition.
- A second site, located near Walnut Creek Road, contains 117 acres of rich forest and is also home to several exquisite basic rock outcrops.
- The Lemanski family is placing 11-acre Pritchard’s Perch, located off of Panther Mountain Road, into an easement this year. This site is adjacent to Nantahala National Forest and will serve as a buffer.
- A 15-acre site just off Buck Creek Road will protect streams leading to Buck Creek and a beautiful forest.
- An old horse farm on Big Ridge is being considered for an easement in 2011. This site is 125 acres, has a natural heritage occurrence for timber rattlesnakes and is the headwaters for three streams. It is an unusual site with lots of open fields and old apple orchards. The viewshed from this site is stunning.
- With any luck we will protect our smallest easement this year. It’s just a .2-acre site, but it has an abundance of green salamanders. In North Carolina the green salamander is a threatened species, but at this site the population has been growing and doing well.
- Tommy and Vickie Chambers will be donating a key tract of land along the Kelsey Trail that will help protect this historic trail. The trail starts at the end of Fifth Street and is part of the Highlands Greenway.
- Two other donations of land are in the works that will protect part of the view from Highway 64.

This holiday consider the gift that keeps on giving ...
a gift membership to HCLT. We will be happy to mail a full color gift certificate to your friend or loved one. Simply call 828.526.1111 or email Julie.hitrust@earthlink.net.

Ways to Give

Cash — Contributions of cash are tax deductible and may be made in one lump sum or a pledge paid over a specified period of time. You may send your contributions to HCLT, PO Box 1703, Highlands, NC 28741 or give online at www.hicashlt.org.

Stock — A gift of stock owned one year or longer generally offers two benefits: You receive an income tax deduction for the fair market value of the stock, and you avoid paying capital gains tax if the stock has appreciated in value.

Step 1: Notify us of your intent to donate stock to HCLT at Julie.hitrust@earthlink.net or 828.526.1111.

Step 2: Have your financial advisor transfer gifts of securities to our account at UVEST:
 DTC Number 0443; HCLT Account Number 3R6-537490

Deferred Gifts — Often referred to as a “painless way to give,” deferred gifts provide many donors an opportunity to make an even greater contribution to HCLT than they are able to do in their lifetimes. Types of deferred gifts include: **bequests, life insurance, IRAs, 401 (k) or pension plans, charitable gift annuities, charitable remainder trusts and charitable lead trusts.**

Every family's financial situation is unique and it is important that you check with your personal attorney or financial advisor to find the most suitable gift arrangement for you and your family.

Sign me up at the following level of HCLT Membership (circle one):

\$35+ Individual	\$100+ Friend	\$500+ Patron	\$5000+ Satulah Steward
\$50+ Family	\$250+ Conservator	\$1000+ Kelsey Benefactor	_____ Other

Name(s) _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ E-mail _____

(memberships are renewed annually in June)

Make checks payable to: **Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust, P.O. Box 1703, Highlands, NC 28741**

OR charge \$ _____ to Visa Master Card American Express Discover

Name on Card _____ Signature _____

Card Number _____ Expiration Date ____/____ V Code _____

Donations to the Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust are tax deductible. We are a 501(c)3 tax-exempt public charity, solicitation license #SL 003035.

A GREAT GIFT! *First Creation*, HCLT's first edition coffee table book.

I would like to order ____ copies of *First Creation* at:

__ \$53 per book* (member) shipped inside NC __ \$50 per book* (member) shipped out of NC (no tax required)
 __ \$64 per book* (non-member) shipped inside NC __ \$60 per book* (non-member) shipped out of NC (no tax required)

*Price includes shipping and handling plus applicable taxes

Ship to the name and address listed above, *or* Ship to the following name and address below:

 I have enclosed a check for \$ _____ to cover the cost of ____ book(s) and shipping, *or*

please charge \$ _____ for ____ book(s) and shipping to my credit card listed above.

Copies of First Creation are \$43 including tax for HCLT members (\$54 including tax for non-members) if picked up at the HCLT office at the Peggy Crosby Center, 348 S. Fifth Street, Highlands. Please call ahead to arrange a time.



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Post Office Box 1703
Highlands, North Carolina 28741-1703
(828)526-1111
hitrust@earthlink.net

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Visit our web site at www.hicashlt.org



HCLT Continues Preservation of Important Mountain Tracts

From large tracts to less than an acre, HCLT protects critical land for the future.

2010 LOOKS LIKE ANOTHER GREAT YEAR FOR HCLT and land conservation. We currently have six conservation easement projects that we are working on. While it is a bit early to count our chickens, it seems likely we will conserve nearly 250 acres in 2010 and already have projects for 2011 that will conserve another 250 acres. In addition to the easement projects we will be receiving three land donations in 2010.

While the acreages for the easement projects are important, the most significant aspects are the ecological values they protect.

Read more about these important land conservation easements and donations on page 6.

HCLT Executive Director Gary Wein with Big Red, a cedar at Walnut Creek conservation easement. This tree may be more than 200 years old, exceptionally old for a red cedar.