



Highlands-Cashiers LAND TRUST

"Saving Special Places since 1909"

Winter, 2009–2010

HCLT's Centennial Year

A community celebration with the Land Trust

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What a year it was! In case you hadn't heard, the Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust has been conserving land since 1909. That year the Highlands Improvement Society, along with the citizens of Highlands, pooled their resources and purchased 60 acres on Satulah Mountain for \$500.

By the end of 2009 we will have added another 2000 acres to those first conserved acres. Throughout this historic year, we've celebrated 100 years of land conservation in a series of events, but it all started with then-Mayor Don Mullen

and Jackson County Commissioners proclaiming 2009 the "Year of Conservation" in Highlands and Cashiers. Heath Shuler also recognized HCLT's contributions in the House of Representatives on February 5, 2009.

From trails to teapots, and pumpkins to paintings, everyone in the community had a chance to celebrate this important milestone with us at one of our ten centennial events.

On May 9, 60 friends, old and new, hiked the historic Kelsey trail from Kelsey-Hutchinson Park to Lila's Rock on White-side Mountain. We even met Mr. Samuel Kelsey (Jason Macaulay), 1909 HCLT President, Marguerite Ravenel (Elaine Whitehurst), and a Civil War soldier from Soldier's Cave (Ron Schott) along the way.

Over 50 of our friends joined us for High Tea on June 7 at Satulah Mountain. They enjoyed tunes from Dave Landis' bagpipes and a wonderful welcome from Ms. Ravenel (portrayed by Becky Schilling). Thanks to the Boy Scouts who helped us by packing in china teacups and other items for the event.

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Dave Landis plays bagpipes at the Satulah Mountain High Tea.

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



HCLT

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- Julie Schott, Director of Development
- Drew Scott, Stewardship and Outreach Coordinator



By **Thomas Bates**
President, HCLT

Perpetually Yours

Season's greetings! As you can see from the contents of this newsletter, 2009 has been quite busy and productive — evidence that land conservation is driven by something other than economic conditions alone.

During this past year we've all had the opportunity to reevaluate our personal resources. Paradoxically, we are blessed by our challenges if we allow them to enhance our sense of gratitude and the priorities we set in our lives. Often in the midst of struggle we enjoy a clearer contrast between the temporal and the eternal — those things of fleeting value versus those of greater permanence.

I have known and loved these mountains all of my life. I grew up hiking these ridges and exploring these forests with my grandfather, "Pops." He taught me to listen, to see and to understand nature. Pops died when I was eight, but he planted seeds within me that still bear fruit today. In the few

years we shared, Pops taught me as much as anyone I know about the value of land and its conservation. I am proud to be connected to his legacy.

One of the most important tools available for land conservation is the conservation easement. This legal instrument allows landowners to preserve and protect the natural integrity of valuable natural resources in perpetuity.

Perpetuity is a highbrow word that simply refers to forever — certainly longer than any of us will ever experience in a lifetime. At best we can hope to affect a small fraction of perpetuity, and yet that is exactly what we, the Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust, seek to accomplish. Individually, we are limited in our finiteness; how-

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ever, in a continuous chain of folks like you, the members of the Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust, celebrating one hundred years of conservation, we link one generation to another, connecting common vision and goals in an eternal continuum — in perpetuity.

Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust is successful because of people like Pops and people like you, who dearly love these mountains and are committed to protecting and sharing our precious natural resources with generations to come. Thank you for your dedication and investment in perpetuity.

Conservation Legislation Pending

The Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust applauds Senator Burr and Representative Shuler for co-sponsoring landmark Agriculture and Open Space Conservation bill.

Generous landowners who voluntarily donate conservation easements to the Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust are inspired by many things: they love the mountains of western North Carolina, they feel connected to their land, and they wish to leave a legacy for future generations. This inspiration is central to our work to permanently protect valuable natural resources. But for almost all of our donors, donating a conservation easement is a major financial decision, and the federal income tax deduction that comes with a donation helps make easements possible for landowners in our community. Unless Congress acts, those federal tax benefits will be dramatically scaled back at the end of 2009.

Two important bills – H.R. 1831 and S. 812 – have been introduced in Congress to make the enhanced conservation easement tax incentive permanent. Senator Burr and Representative Shuler have already signed on as co-sponsors of this legislation, which will aid in the protection of millions of acres of America's agricultural lands, historic landscapes, natural resources and wide open spaces. So far, Senator Kay Hagan(D) has not cosponsored this bill. The expiring incentive allows modest-income landowners to receive significant tax savings for donating conservation easements that permanently protect important resources on their land. We are hopeful that these bills will come up for a vote before the end of the year. Without their passage we will lose a valuable land conservation tool.

Importantly, the enhanced incentive is an invaluable conservation tool that the HCLT has used to protect over 1000 acres since it was first enacted in 2006. The tax savings have benefited many local landowners who have recently conserved their land with us; the incentive has also helped to increase landowner interest in working with us to conserve their land. HCLT champions these bills and is working with our Congressional delegation as well as the Land Trust Alliance to secure their passage to make

the incentive permanent.

The 2008 Farm Bill recently extended a 2006 incentive that enables family farmers, ranchers, and other moderate-income landowners to get a significant tax benefit for donating a conservation easement on their land. The legislation allows easement donors to:

- deduct up to 50% of their adjusted gross income in any year (up from 30%);
- deduct up to 100% of their adjusted gross income if the majority of that income came from farming, ranching or forestry; and
- continue to take deductions for as long as 16 years (up from 6 years).

Each day we are touched by the generous and inspired landowners who work with us. A permanent incentive will make it easier for others in our community to build on their love of the land and permanently protect our mountains.

Land conservation takes a team to be successful. We thank all of our land donors, supporting members, and our Congressional delegation for their invaluable contributions. Find out more at www.lta.org/easementincentive.

New HCLT Officers Elected

At its July 2009 Board of Directors meeting, a new slate of officers was elected to a three-year term.

Thomas Bates of Cashiers was elected president, John Warren, also of Cashiers, as vice president, and Linda David of Highlands was elected treasurer. Jeff Zahner of Highlands was elected to be the Land Trust secretary for another three-year term.

Past president Mercedes Heller, vice-president Hillrie Quin, treasurer Pat Patrick, and secretary Jeff Zahner oversaw a doubling in conserved properties since 2006 and helped the Land Trust celebrate 100 years of conservation. Thanks to their efforts and thanks in advance to the new officers for the great work they will do.

HCLT's Centennial Year continued from page 1

The Cashiers Historical Society celebrated our 100th anniversary by dedicating a new nature trail to the Land Trust at their annual Pinnacle Party on June 25. The self-guided, quarter-mile nature trail was designed by Gary Wein, Tim Osment and John Warren.

On August 22, The Bascom art center threw a party and honored us with an exhibition of two artists, Will Henry Stevens and Lamar Dodd. These artists left legacies of inspirational beauty through their painted images of southern landscapes.

At Summit One Gallery, a group of local artists, brought together by Mary Adair Leslie and Rosemary Stiefel, exhibited their artwork based on photographs taken of Land Trust properties. Many of the photographs are in our new coffee table book, *First Creation*. This book is a photographic essay of our protection efforts over the past 100 years. Stop by the office and buy your copy soon.

Over 200 supporters joined us for our final centennial event, an autumn Pumpkinfest on October 27. Festival goers enjoyed a chain saw pumpkin carving demo, an antique apple cider press, Appalachian storytelling, an awesome hayride, and choosing their pumpkin from The David Farm pumpkin patch,

What a grand year we had! Thanks to all who joined us and a special thank you to the Cullasaja Women's Outreach for their grant that helped to make it all possible.



A Pumpkinfest highlight was the chainsaw demo by Hillrie Quin.

Participants in HCLT's elk photo tour learned about Cataloochee Valley's successful elk reintroduction program and enjoyed the magnificent creatures up-close and personal through the camera's lens. Professional photographer Mark Hutchison offered valuable tips for better outdoor photography.





"Snakes and Ice Cream" kicked off this season's Village Nature Series. Above, Patrick Brannon of the Highlands Nature Center discussed various species that call our region home, and brought four-legged and slithering friends to the party. VNS, now in its third year, is co-hosted by Cashiers Village Green.

The Cashiers Historical Society quarter-mile nature trail dedication took place at their annual Pinnacle Party this summer. Pictured from left: Thomas Bates, Gary Wein, John Warren, Darla McBurney, chair of the Cashiers Historical Society, and Mercedes Heller.



Below, hikers rest during the historic Kelsey trail hike from Kelsey-Hutchinson Park to Lila's Rock on Whiteside Mountain, part of HCLT's centennial celebration.



Above, Clare and Wiley Ellis at the Satulah High Tea. Clare is a descendent of the Ravenel family, original land donors to the Highlands Improvement Society.

A Very Good Year!

Not only does 2009 mark 100 years of land conservation for HCLT, but it also may be our best year yet in terms of total acres protected.

We have already completed two new conservation easements this year and are on track to complete another eight. All together these new easements will protect nearly 400 acres and bring our total of conserved lands since 1909 to over 2000 acres in more than 65 sites. Since 2006 we have nearly doubled the number of acres protected by our Land Trust.

Your support, through membership and donations, has made this all possible. We still have more to do so please continue to support us as we protect those place we all love.

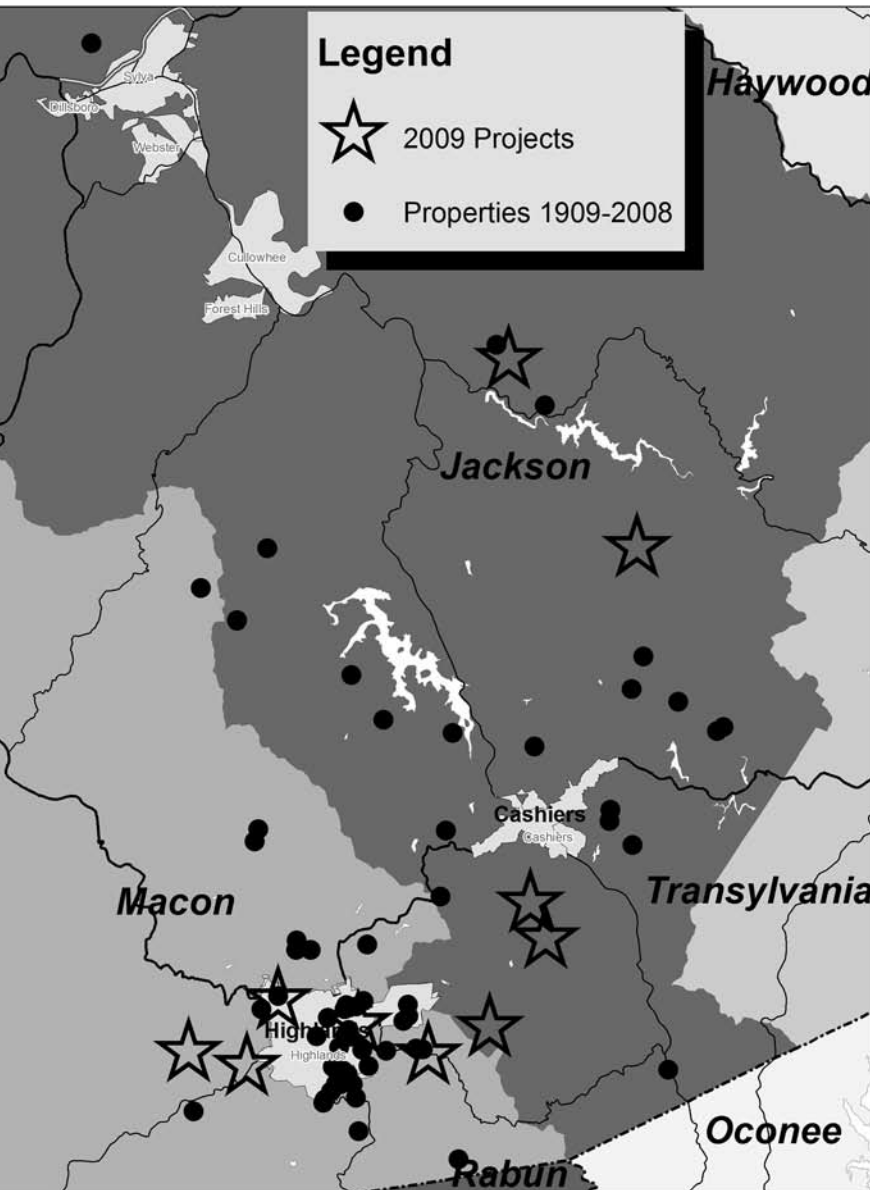
The following are newly donated conservation easements:

- Bob and Pixie Killebrew have placed an easement on their 12 acres on Turtle Pond Road that protects a segment of Turtle Pond Creek.
- Sarah and Bob Fenton placed an easement on their three-acre tract off of Hickory Hill Road that protects a small tributary of Big Creek, the town of Highlands drinking water source.
- The heirs of James E. Warren Sr. have agreed to donate a 132-acre easement on Timber Ridge, along the bluffs of the Chattooga River.

Easements are pending on the following properties:

- A 41-acre tract in Whiteside Cove that will protect several waterfalls and headwater streams of Norton Mill Creek.
- A 10-acre historic site in Horse Cove that will protect a terrific view of Black Rock Mt. and a structure built in 1848.
- Approximately 60 acres adjacent to the Nantahala National Forest's Panther-town that will protect a section of the Robinson Creek State Natural Heritage Area.
- A green salamander site in the Town of Highlands. This amphibian is a state endangered species and the site represents one of the few populations in the state that is growing.
- A 65-acre site on Shortoff Mountain.
- 12 acres located next to Nantahala National Forest Land near the Chattooga River.
- 16 acres that contain the headwaters to East Fork Creek that leads to Glen Falls.

The conservation of these sites will protect wildlife habitat, historic sites, water quality, endangered species habitat, and important views forever. The donors of these easements have shown great vision and generosity. We have much more work to do but your donations and support made this happen. Thank you.





Meet Drew Scott

My name is Drew Austin Scott, and I love North Carolina.

I was born in Winston-Salem and have lived in Stokes County near Pilot Mountain State Park nearly all of my life. I am very fortunate to have traveled to many beautiful places in this wonderful country of ours, from the swamps of Florida, to the Mojave Desert, Yellowstone and Yosemite National Parks, and most places in between, but in my opinion nothing rivals the beauty and awe inspired by my home state.

As a recent graduate of Appalachian State University in Boone, I am now ready to venture forth into the world to carve out a space for myself. Before I begin my career, however, I want to do my part to help protect the state I love and cherish most. Through the Americorps program I have found the opportunity to do exactly that.

For the next eleven months I will be volunteering as the Stewardship and Outreach Coordinator for the Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust in Highlands. My goal in this program is to try and preserve a little piece of this beautiful land for the generations to come.

Every day presents a threat to our state's wilderness lands from development and urban encroachment, and I want nothing more than to keep our state wonderful and wild. I hope that with my service here and with that of others with similar goals, we can save our state from becoming just another section of urban sprawl. North Carolina is a beautiful and wondrous place, and I plan to keep it that way.

LAND TRUST DAY

On the first Saturday of June, businesses across the state showed their support for their local land trusts by donating a percentage of their sales or by making donations to them.

Land Trust Day, as it is known, is a state-wide public awareness event and was celebrated in Highlands and Cashiers for the third year in a row this summer. Several businesses participated in support of Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust and their local land conservation work.

When you patronize these local businesses, please be sure to thank them for investing in our community:

THIRD YEAR SUPPORTERS:

Highland Hiker (Highlands & Cashiers)

The Orchard (Cashiers)

Whole Life Market (Highlands)

SECOND YEAR SUPPORTERS:

Fressers Eatery (Highlands)

Lakeside Restaurant (Highlands)
Evening at Lakeside

Victoria's Closet and VC for Men (Cashiers)

NEW CONSERVATION BUSINESS PARTNERS:

The Chinquapin Company (Cashiers)

Debbie Grossman, owner of Fressers Eatery said, "By supporting Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust, we are helping to protect the landscape that draws so many of our customers here in the first place. For me, it's a smart investment in my business as well as our community."

Grossman added, "My customers loved the idea of eating dessert for a good cause!"

Giant Steps Towards Land Trust Alliance Accreditation

A land trust is much more than a group of well-intentioned members, board directors, and staff conserving important places. Because a land trust deals with deeds, legal documents, and tax issues it is important that we operate according to the laws of the land.

Towards that end the HCLT has adopted a set of written policies and procedures that will guide us as we continue to conserve important places. These written policies are based on a set of standard operating principles and practices developed by our national umbrella organization, The Land Trust Alliance. They deal with issues such as how we record information, ethically conduct our operations, and how we conserve and steward our protected lands.

The adoption of these written policies does not mean a change in what we do or how we have been operating, it just makes them "official" policy. Adopting these policies and procedures is the first step towards Land Trust Alliance Accreditation. We plan to apply for accreditation in 2011. Wish us luck.



HCLT members enjoyed a wonderful evening at our Annual Celebration held at The Bascom this September. 2008 conservation easement and land donors were honored for their contributions and given a beautiful wood bowl, hand turned by local artist Donald Krebs.



The Cashiers Earthday 2009 celebration was co-hosted by the Land Trust, Jackson-Macon Conservation Alliance, Upper Cullasaja Watershed Association and Whole Life Market, and drew crowds of all ages. Above, two youngsters sport new HCLT tee shirts furnished by a grant from the State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) to help spread the word about their program. This state agency helps prioritize habitats in need of protection.

First Creation continued from back page

First Creation is available at locations throughout the Highlands and Cashiers area. Many retail stores, galleries, hotels and inns have the book for sale. Those wishing to order directly from the Land Trust for shipment may do so for an additional shipping charge. Alternatively, just give us a call at 526-1111 and we can arrange a time for you to stop by the Land Trust office and purchase your copy. All proceeds will be used to protect even more of our magnificent mountain landscapes.

First Creation is a meaningful gift for everyone on your list. Consider upgrading your gift purchase to include a one-year \$35 membership to Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust. Members receive admission to our eco tour events throughout the year, our seasonal newsletter and a full-color HCLT logo decal.

Use the form at right to order copies of *First Creation* for yourself and as a gift for friends.

Give a gift that lasts forever!

THREE WAYS TO DONATE

- Clip the form below and mail to HCLT at PO Box 1703, Highlands, NC 28741
- Online at www.hicashlt.org
- Call 526-1111

Help Save Our Natural Heritage

dec09

Please accept my donation of \$_____ and put it to work.

I want to be a member of the Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust. Please sign me up at the following level (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 your donation 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.

Order your copies of *First Creation*

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

Please ship to the name and address listed above, *or*

please ship to the following name and address: _____

(Include any additional addresses on a separate sheet.)

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.



Highlands-Cashiers LAND TRUST

"Saving Special Places since 1909"

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

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Visit our web site at www.hicashlt.org

FIRST CREATION

Book celebrates 100 years of local land conservation

Labor Day weekend appropriately marked the culmination of a great deal of labor that went into the birth of a beautiful coffee table book by the Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust to celebrate 100 years of land conservation. The book, which went on sale September 4, has been very well received by the community and seems well on its way to becoming a classic in the Highlands and Cashiers communities. The book, *First Creation*, takes its title from the writings of Professor Thomas Harbison, an early settler and naturalist:

*This forest is ages old. It was old, very old, long before the Rocky Mountains range and the lofty Himalayas reared their peaks into the clouds. To me there is nothing more sacred on our earth than these forests which were God's **first creation**.*

The production of this "first creation" truly has been a community affair. The works of local professional and amateur photographers and carefully chosen historic photos fill the 96-page hardbound volume. Local historian Ran Shaffner contributed countless hours to this project, local artist Sarah Morgan Wingfield provided artistic expertise, and many others gave unselfishly of their time and resources. To all these friends, we give thanks. Much in the same spirit as our land conservation efforts, we wanted to create something that this and future generations would appreciate. Perhaps 100 years from now our great-grandchildren will hike the lands we are protecting and give thanks for this extraordinary community of determined conservationists — volunteers, partners, land owners, friends — who refused to forfeit our natural heritage. *First Creation* is a celebration of the progress we've made so far and will inspire those who follow to continue these efforts.

First Creation continued on page 8

