

# OVERLOOK *on the Highlands-Cashiers Plateau*

Summer, 2007

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*The mission of the Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust is to preserve the natural areas, scenic beauty, and green spaces of Highlands and Cashiers for the enjoyment and benefit of the public.*

## *A Southern Appalachian Bog*

# Dulany Bog

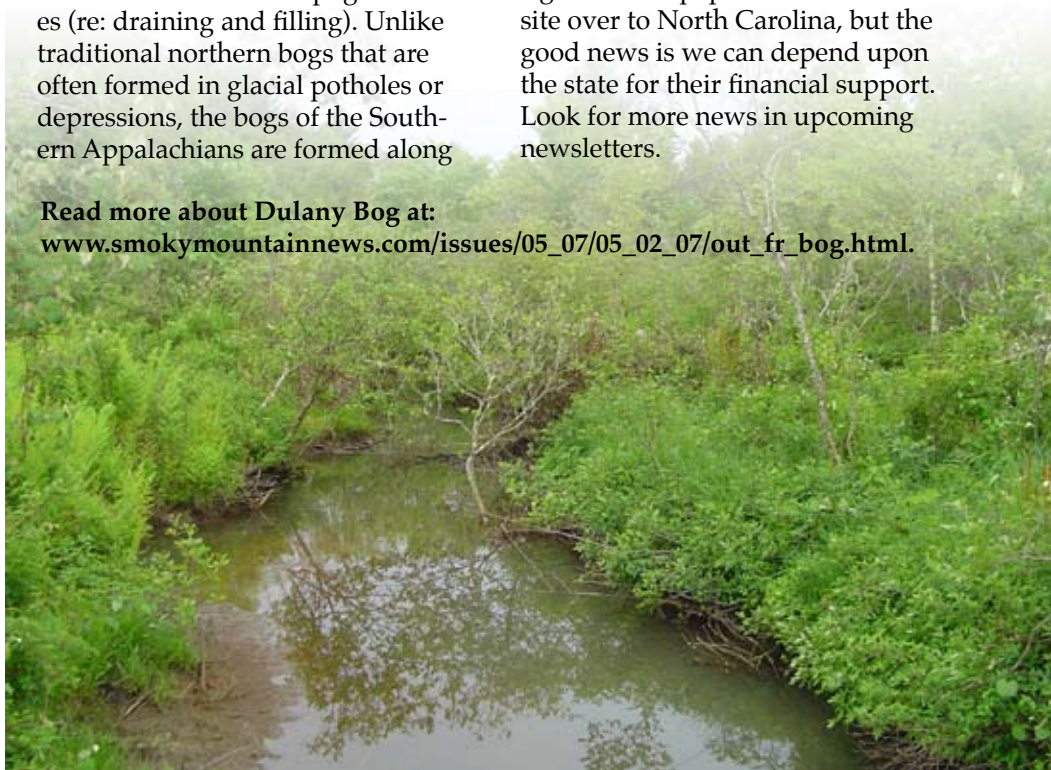
In April 2007 the North Carolina Natural Heritage Trust Fund Board of Trustees approved funding for the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services to acquire the 38-acre Emerson Lusk tract in Jackson County on Highway 107 south of Cashiers. This marks the culmination of an ongoing effort by the HCLT to purchase the remaining unprotected portion of Dulany Bog. The Highlands Biological Station and U.S. Forest Service already own the upper two-thirds of the Bog but the lowest third, some 9 acres, was unprotected.

The Dulany Bog is a great example of a Southern Appalachian Bog, a habitat that is both rare and often lost due to anthropogenic causes (re: draining and filling). Unlike traditional northern bogs that are often formed in glacial potholes or depressions, the bogs of the Southern Appalachians are formed along

small streams where a combination of slope seepage, impeded drainage, and rainfall result in stagnant acidic conditions. The low pH conditions result in the accumulation of organic matter or peat. Spagnum moss, sedges, small trees and shrubs dominate the vegetation of these systems. These sites are often the home for unusual or endangered species. Pitcher plants and the Federally and State Threatened swamp pink (*Helonias bullata*) are found in Dulany Bog. On nearby upland sites Fraeser's Loosestrife, a state endangered species, is also found. Bogs are also great places to find the rare Bog turtle and several salamander species.

A lot has to happen before we sign the final papers and turn the site over to North Carolina, but the good news is we can depend upon the state for their financial support. Look for more news in upcoming newsletters.

**Read more about Dulany Bog at:**  
[www.smokymountainnews.com/issues/05\\_07/05\\_02\\_07/out\\_fr\\_bog.html](http://www.smokymountainnews.com/issues/05_07/05_02_07/out_fr_bog.html).





## Land Trusts: A National Perspective

By Mercedes Heller,  
President, HCLT

*The Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust is the oldest land trust in North Carolina and one of the oldest in the United States.*

This is quite exceptional considering the fact that the Highlands-Cashiers area covers a minute portion of the Blue Ridge Mountains. It is an accomplishment that conveys pride in the communities and a strong desire to preserve the beauty and natural heritage that we all enjoy.

However, the Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust is only one example of the many land trusts that make up the national organization, Land Trust Alliance (LTA). On the national level there are more than 1,500 land trusts with the same mission, that of actively conserving land for protection of natural areas and wildlife habitat.

Each year America loses two million acres of farms, forests and open spaces. Pristine landscapes are converted to shopping malls, subdivisions and highways. In the process, more than 100,000 acres of wetlands are destroyed, degrading water quality and contributing to flooding. Americans love their land and yearn to take charge of growth in their hometowns, while at the same time respecting the rights of landowners. In this context, voluntary conservation by private land trusts is succeeding on a scale never before seen.

The conservation of land in small communities like ours is a local story that rarely garners national attention. Yet the combined impact of 1,500+ private land trusts operating in every state of the nation is growing significantly, bringing the benefits of clean water, wildlife, parks, urban gardens, family farms, woods and rivers to millions of Americans. From ranchers of wide open spaces in the West, to urban gardeners in dense cities, to kids exploring wetlands, to armchair travelers who enjoy scenic vistas, Americans all have something in common — their love for the outdoors is being protected for future generations.

This is being done through a special type of private, nonprofit organization called a land trust, whose mission is typically to preserve a certain type of land that is important to the character and soul of each community. Little known just two decades ago, land trusts are now one of the fastest-growing and most successful conservation movements in American history (see chart on page 3).

A recently published five year report by the Land Trust Alliance confirms that there has been record growth in conservation. Total acres conserved from 2000 to 2005 increased 54% to 37 million acres in just the past five years. This is an area more than 16 times the size of Yellowstone National Park. The pace of private land conservation has tripled by local and state land trusts. From 1995 to 2000, land trusts conserved an average of 337,937 acres per year. That pace soared to 1,166,697 acres conserved per year, on average, from 2000 to 2005.

Additionally, the land trusts in the United States markedly enhanced their professionalism and increased

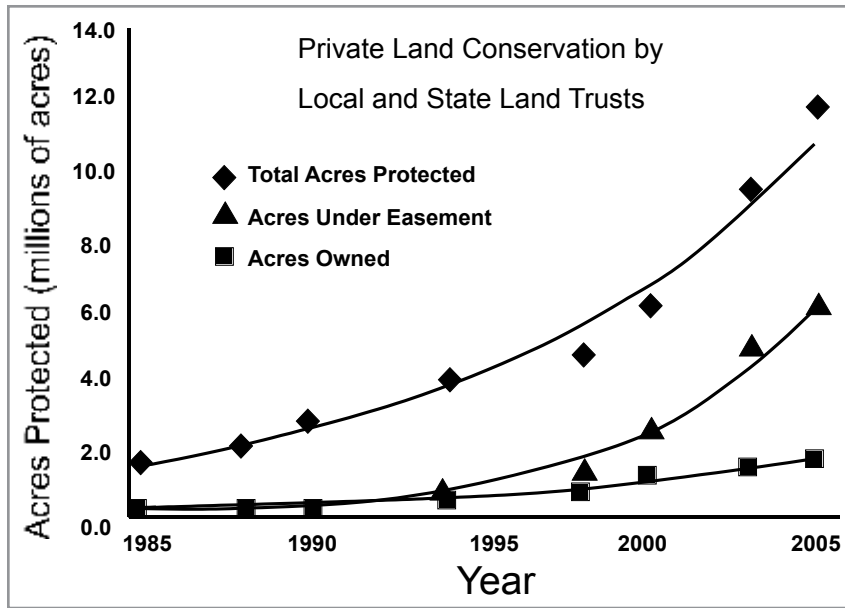
their ranks to 1,667 in 2005 from 1,263 in 2000. The Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust met all criteria for professionalism in land trust practices in 2005.

A fairly new movement in conservation, the conservation easement/agreement, increased the acres protected by this method by 148% in the last five years. These private, voluntary agreements saved 6,245,969 acres during the last five year census review by LTA.

The land types reported as being the primary focus of land trust efforts are natural areas and wildlife habitat (39%), followed by open space (38%) and water resources (26%), especially wetlands. Yet the type of land protected nationwide is quite varied, reflecting the regional differences in landforms. Other protected areas are farms, coastal shores, prairies, deserts, urban gardens, and local parks. Another emerging pattern is land conservation in connection with building affordable housing.

Although we sometimes wish we could block out the rest of the world and preserve our little paradise here on the Highlands-Cashiers Plateau, we must become aware that we are an important part of a much larger organization that has the same mission as ours. We participate on a local level by assisting the LTA as it pursues its goals of nationwide conservation and land protection. For more information about the Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust call 526-9938, ext. 250. Or, for further information about the Land Trust Alliance visit [www.LTA.org](http://www.LTA.org).

*“The conservation of land in small communities like ours is a local story that rarely garners national attention. Yet the combined impact of 1,500+ private land trusts operating in every state of the nation is growing significantly.”*



The graph at left charts the expansion of land protected between 1985 and 2005 by the many land trusts that make up the Land Trust Alliance. The Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust is proud to be a part of this impressive growth pattern.



*Spring is in full swing! And we all know what that means.*

Yeah, sure, it brings us May flowers, warmer days and a calendar full of social gatherings. But what I'm talking about is something even better — the opportunity to support the Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust in our mission to save the places you love! That's right, it's time to renew (or begin!) your Membership with HCLT.

As you know, we have been doing great things in our community and it is all because of the support of our partners like you. **Without you, we would not be able to accomplish our goal to save these special places we all love before it is too late.** As stewards of this most amazing

land we must take our responsibility seriously. So please, take a moment right now to **send whatever contribution you are able.** We also accept in memoriam gifts, bequests, gifts in honor of a loved one (perfect for weddings, birthdays, etc.), and stock donations.

Thank you in advance for your willingness to stand up for the future of this land that we have been entrusted with. Through all of our efforts, perhaps our grandchildren's children will be able to enjoy the blessing of this beautiful place we call home.

Julie Schott, Development Coordinator, HCLT

## Help Save Our Natural Heritage

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):

- |                  |                    |                           |                         |
|------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|
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| \$50+ Family     | \$250+ Conservator | \$1000+ Kelsey Benefactor | _____ Other             |

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(memberships are renewed annually in May)

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Donations to the Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust are tax deductible. We are a 501(c)3 tax-exempt public charity.

## NEWS FROM THE KELSEY TRAIL

The Kelsey Trail was first traveled by horseback in 1883, from the end of Fifth Street in Highlands to the top of Whiteside Mountain. Throughout the years portions of the trail were bought by developers and the forest service. In 2001, the only remaining intact remnant of this scenic historic trail was purchased by the Highlands Land Trust, now the Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust. That section extends from near the end of Fifth Street through 11.5 acres of giant hemlock trees to the Sherwood Forest subdivision.

The woolly adelgid epidemic is fast destroying those giant hemlocks. Something had to be done to save these giants. According to the Jackson-Macon County Alliance the trees were too far gone for the lady beetles to be effective. With that grim news, the president of the Highlands Cashiers Land Trust, Mercedes Heller, approached Fred Gehrish, Greens and Grounds Superintendent at Highlands Falls Country Club, about the possibility of his chemically treating the hemlocks at a reduced rate.

Heller knew that Highlands Falls Country Club has always been supportive of the community and thought they would like to be involved in this very worthwhile project. She was not disappointed. In the spirit of community service Gehrish offered to treat the trees at no charge other than the cost of the chemicals.

Gehrish, a graduate of Ohio State University



*Fred Gehrish, Antonio Ruiz, and Jose Sanchez (left to right) next to one of the 100 trees they treated for the hemlock woolly adelgid along the Kelsey Trail.*

in agronomy, is licensed for pesticide application in North Carolina. He and his crew began the project in April and treated between 75 and 100 hemlocks that line the Kelsey Trail.

Gary Wein, executive director of the HCLT, is hopeful that the health of the trees can be restored enough for the beetles to be effective in about two years, since the chemicals will dissipate in that time period. Wein further expressed his gratitude to Highlands Falls Country Club for their spirit of community service in helping the Land Trust try to save these trees, some of which are over 300 years old.

## **HCLT Retreat and Strategic Plan**

By Bert Westbrook

The board of directors of the Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust met in March and began work on the second in a series of three-year strategic plans. With an expanded board of directors and a greater area of responsibility, from Highlands Land Trust to Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust, a principal task for our growing land trust is to develop a set of policies and procedures as guides toward the accomplishment of our mission. Once published, these policies and procedures will supplant the oral tradition that has served us since the beginning of the Land Trust in Highlands almost a hundred years ago. Established policies and procedures will foster a smoother transition for new people on the board of directors and on the staff.

Everything that is done in any organization should be justified as support for the mission. So it is with the HCLT. Our mission is to protect land. We do not state it quite so simply, yet. But there is talk among the members of the board that the goal should be to simplify the mission statement so that everyone who lives in

Highlands and Cashiers is aware that the mission of the Land Trust is to permanently protect property, to which we might add, "for future generations."

A Board of Directors Retreat was held on March 24 at the Highlands-Cashiers Hospital Conference Center. The retreat was facilitated by Chuck Roe, a veteran environmentalist and the same facilitator that helped us develop our 2003–2006 Strategic Plan. Expectations are equally high for the successful work of the next three years. The Land Trust Alliance has developed a set of standards to guide land trusts. HCLT is committed to be certified in accordance with these standards so as to leave no doubt in the minds of donors and supporters that our mission will be accomplished as stated. HCLT is the oldest land trust in North Carolina and one of the oldest land trusts in the nation. Such a span of history in a business yet young helps to illumine the scope of the challenge of the loss of green space faced today. Through growth and expanded effort, HCLT intends to meet that challenge.

## Two for the Price of One

This summer there will be two conservation lecture series in the Highlands-Cashiers area. The Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust is proud to cosponsor the Eighth Zahner Conservation Lecture Series with the Highlands Biological Station and Highlands Biological Foundation. This year HCLT and the Village Green will also cosponsor the new Village Nature Series.

This year the Zahner Conservation Lecture Series will host 12 lectures at the Highlands Biological Station on Thursdays at 7:00 p.m.. The first lecture is on May 24, and will feature Dr. John Morse, Professor of Entomology at Clemson. He will be talking about "Taking Stock in the Smokies: An Ambitious Inventory of the Biota in Our Most Popular National Park."

The Village Nature Series, with five lectures, will be held in the Cashiers Library. The first lecture on May 23 is by Dr. Robert Wyatt, former director of the Highlands Biological Station. He will be discussing "Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Sex\* But Were Afraid to Ask (\*in Plants)."

Included in this newsletter are full schedules for both lecture series. So come out and join us in learning more about our world through science, art, sculpture, and the written word.



Zahner Conservation Lectures 2007



## My Sweet Betsy *Trillium cuneatum*

By Gary Wein, Executive Director, HCLT

The southern Appalachians are the center of biological diversity for many plant and animal species because of its terrain and complex landscape; they may have served as a refuge from the glaciers of the far north. This includes the highest diversity for some of my favorite forest wildflowers, the Trilliums.

There are some 30 species of Trilliums in the eastern United States. These herbaceous, long-lived perennials are characterized by having three leaves and a single flower with three petals. The Trilliums fall into two groups based on whether or not their flowers are sessile (no flower stalk) or pediculate (hang down). A common Trillium that falls into this first group and is flowering this time of year is *Trillium cuneatum*. It is also known as whip-poor-will flower, cuneate trillium, large toadshade, purple toadshade, bloody butcher, and sweet Betsy. The sweet Betsy is found as far north as Pennsylvania and Illinois, as far west as Alabama, as far east as the Atlantic Coast and south to the Gulf Coast.

Sweet Betsy gets its name from the spicy sweet odor of the flower. The scent of the maroon flower is probably meant to attract flies as pollinators. This plant flowers in

the spring before the forest trees have leaved out and there is lots of sun on the forest floor. They set seed during the summer, and when mature the seeds are carried away by ants. The ants do not want the seed, but rather a fatbody on the seed. They carry it to their nest where they cut off the fatbody and throw the seed away into a nutrient-rich ant garbage pile. After the seeds germinate in the spring they can take up to three years to form a single leaf. After a few more years they form the typical mottled three leaves. Because they are also clonal they live a long time.

The suggestions that *Trillium cuneatum* is a cure for anything is greatly exaggerated although it has been suggested to be a useful for lung, pancreatic, liver, and kidney disease, dysentery and menstrual hemorrhage, and as a fertility herb.

The presence of plants such as sweet Betsy and other wildflowers in our forests indicates that we have intact forest ecosystems that have not been drastically impacted by man. These values are worth conserving for generations to come. To learn more about conservation options contact the Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust ([www.hicashlt.org](http://www.hicashlt.org)).

# Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust

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## Don't let his expression fool you. Earth Day was a blast!

*Where can you find a baby bear cub, six stellar bands, and a gathering of fun-loving, environmentally aware folks? Earth Day 2007 in Cashiers, of course!*

**U**nder sunny skies, festival-goers from Cashiers, Highlands, and surrounding areas gathered to celebrate our planet and to communicate about critical environmental issues.

Earth Day celebrated its 37th anniversary this year. Gaylord Nelson, a U.S. senator from Wisconsin and a longtime conservationist spearheaded what turned into the first Earth Day in 1970. Today it has evolved into a global celebration of the environment and commitment to its protection. Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust together with the Jackson-Macon Conservation Alliance, the Upper Cullasaja Watershed Association and Whole Life Market co-hosted this informative and fun event on April 21 at the Village Green.

Local non-profits and eco-friendly for-profits took this opportunity to educate participants about the work they do and

about what can be done on an individual level. Kids and kids at heart had the opportunity to, among other things, milk a cow (OK, so it was the one dimensional variety — but still great fun!) and to put their golfing skills to the test on the mini-golf course. Four-legged friends from the Cashiers Humane Society were on site looking for good homes. And of course, the Elijah Wildlife Rehabilitation Center wowed the crowd with its baby bear cub, lynx cat, screech owl and other neat critters who are all being rehabilitated under their care.

What a great opportunity Earth Day was for our community to gather and celebrate, educate, and communicate about our planet. It served as a strong reminder of the work still needed to protect the natural gifts we have been entrusted with. So mark your calendars because next year you won't want to miss Earth Day 2008!

