

1,690 new  
acres protected!

Indian Fort Nature Preserve



**Genesee Valley Conservancy** Summer Newsletter

2015



# From the Executive Director



On visits to the Indian Fort Nature Preserve this spring, I watched as the May Apple plants grew to create large patches along the trails. One morning, I decided to take a closer look. Kneeling down and peering up, I was rewarded by a beautiful bloom and captured the view on the front cover. Sometimes it is the details that remind you why a place is so special.

Agriculture is such a large part of our region, it can hardly be called a detail. But the productive soils of the flats, the lands along the Genesee River, are a noteworthy detail of agriculture. The Hamilton family doesn't take for granted the good fortune they have to be working this high quality ground. We are pleased to have worked with them to ensure the conservation of their land in Leicester and Geneseo (page 5).

Another farm that stands out in our region is the Sunny Knoll Farm. Located south of the village of Lima, this farm never overlooks the details. Their farm is immaculate: careful trimming around barns, organized equipment, and a spotless machine shop. All are representative of the quality operation run on this land. Not only are the day-to-day details in order, the Schenkel and Grushow families also recently protected their farmland to ensure the high quality soils remains a viable part of the community, *forever*.

In working on the Conservancy's own future, we had the good fortune to bring on Kevin Hauser as an intern this past semester (below). Kevin's work was a constant reminder of the talent and benefits that the university brings to the community. His work will have a lasting impact on Genesee Valley Conservancy and our land conservation efforts for years to come.

As we continue celebrating our 25th anniversary, we have the unique opportunity to hear from Peter Nye, former DEC endangered species biologist. Peter was part of the team that successfully reversed the Bald Eagles decline in New York State, a trend that at first went unnoticed and almost cost us this beautiful bird (page 3).

With 25 years of success, it is easy to see the big picture of the Conservancy efforts, but it is in the detail that we find our true purpose.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ben".

Benjamin Gajewski, Executive Director

## Geography Intern Prioritizes Land for Conservation

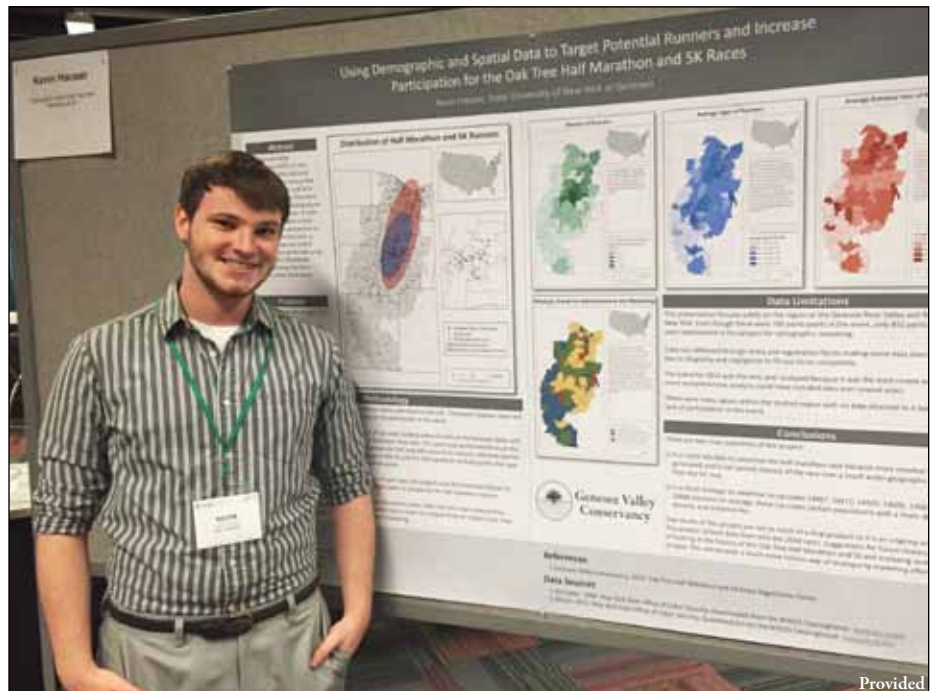
By Kevin Hauser

My name is Kevin Hauser and this past year I had the very rewarding experience of working with the Conservancy. By studying geography and environmental studies at SUNY Geneseo, I had the unique opportunity to combine both of these fields through an internship. More specifically, I used geographic information systems (GIS) to perform spatial analyses and create maps for the Conservancy's use.

My first project used data from the 2014 Oak Tree Half Marathon and 5K races to target potential areas for advertising the event this year. I reviewed density, age, and average entrance fees of the runners to determine strategic areas to increase attendance and participation.

The second, and more intensive project, consisted of prioritizing parcels of land for

continued on page 6...



Kevin's first project involved analyzing Oak Tree Race participation regionally, to aid in marketing efforts this year. Kevin presented this project at the Association of American Geographers in Chicago this spring (above).

# Bald Eagles: Rising from the Brink of Extinction

By Cathy Gardner

A symbol of strength, independence and majesty, the bald eagle was proclaimed the emblem of the United States of America on June 20, 1782. Even earlier, in 1778, the Bald Eagle was depicted atop the coat of arms adopted by the State of New York.

At that time, eagles were commonly observed throughout New York State. However, in the early 1900's, sightings became less frequent as shooting, logging, and habitat loss took tolls on the population. Soon thereafter, pollution and chemicals, including DDT, entered the food chain and accelerated the decline. By 1970, just one nesting pair could be found in the State. Located near Hemlock Lake, these two eagles continued to breed, but the eggs were not viable and no eaglets hatched. The Bald Eagle was near extinction in New York State.

With a national ban on DDT enacted in 1972, and prohibitions against taking or killing Bald Eagles mandated by the federal Endangered Species Act of 1973, prospects for a turnaround surfaced. In 1976, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation endeavored to restore

Bald Eagles to the State. For the next twelve years, NYSDEC biologist Peter Nye led New York's Bald Eagle Restoration Project. With assistance from many partners, teams of biologists collected young eaglets from western states, brought them to New York, raised them atop high towers in specially constructed nests and released them once they could fly.

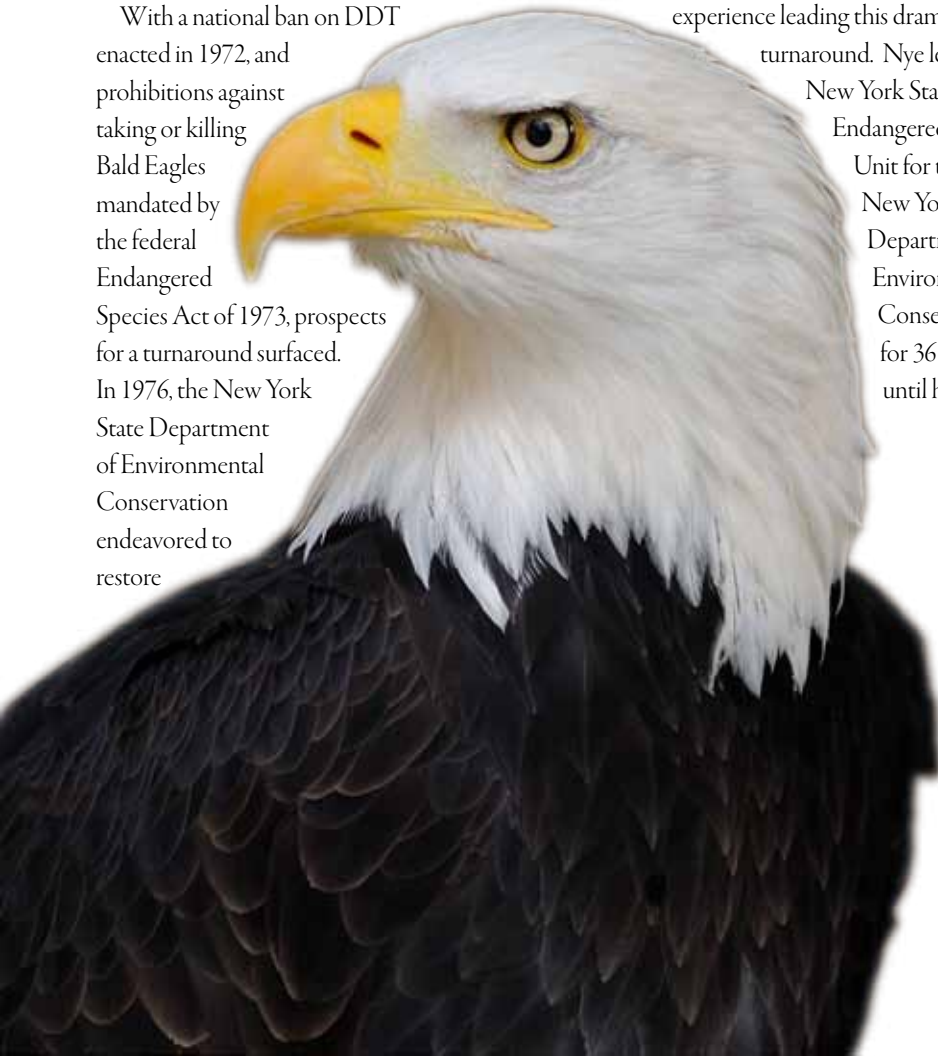
In time, this unprecedented undertaking led to remarkable success. By 1989, the process, referred to as "hacking," achieved its preliminary goal of establishing ten breeding pairs within New York. Today, more than 250 breeding pairs have been documented and it is once again possible to observe this magnificent raptor in many areas throughout New York.

On October 23, Peter Nye, a nationally renowned wildlife biologist, will discuss his experience leading this dramatic turnaround. Nye led New York State's Endangered Species Unit for the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation for 36 years, until his



Peter Nye in his days working for New York State. You can hear first hand about the remarkable effort to restore Eagles to NYS. Provided

retirement in 2010. He was deeply involved in numerous endangered species projects, including extensive work on Bald Eagles, Golden Eagles, Peregrine Falcons, Osprey and Sea Eagles. He has led numerous investigations into breeding and wintering ecology, migratory pathways and essential habitats of these species, and has written extensively of these results. He was a past leader of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Northern States Bald Eagle Recovery Team, is a member of the select international working group on Sea Eagles and Climate Change, and is an adjunct faculty at the University of Albany where he currently teaches a graduate course in Wildlife Management. A mini documentary film will accompany Nye's presentation on the return of the Bald Eagle. **GVC**



*Special Guest Lecture by Peter Nye*

*Oct. 23 - 7:00pm*

*Riviera Theater  
4 Center St, Geneseo*

*Free: Seating is limited*

*Conservancy members are  
encouraged to reserve seats:*

*Contact the office by Oct. 20th  
243-2190 | [info@geneseevalleyconservancy.org](mailto:info@geneseevalleyconservancy.org)*

*Remaining seats will be available that  
evening to the public on a first-come basis.*



## Lima Farmland Protected

By David Bojanowski

On June 19, Genesee Valley Conservancy completed the protection of the Sunny Knoll Farm purchase of development rights project in the town of Lima. This project consisted of permanently protecting 495 acres of fertile farmland along Route 15A south of the Village of Lima. The scenic rolling hills and highly productive farmland owned by the Gruschow and Schenkel families is protected in perpetuity for agricultural use with a conservation easement held by the Conservancy.

***“We need to step up and protect our most productive ag land.”***

The multi-generation Sunny Knoll Farm operated by the Gruschow family grows corn, wheat, soybeans, and grows and processes edible dry beans. Regarding the permanent protection of farmland, owner/operator Roger Gruschow commented, “They aren’t making



*The Schenkel land captures the unique balance of protecting the farmland and saving the hedgerows!*

DB

any more farmland and we need to step up and protect our most productive ag land for future generations of farmers and secure our ability to put food on our tables.”

Don Schenkel, an avid outdoorsman, purchased the land both as an investment in land and for outdoor recreational purposes. Don and his wife Laurel value the productive farmland and agricultural heritage of the region as much as they appreciate and promote the natural wildlife on the land. Aware of the development potential and the future uncertainty of the land Laurel commented after the easement closing, “we now have

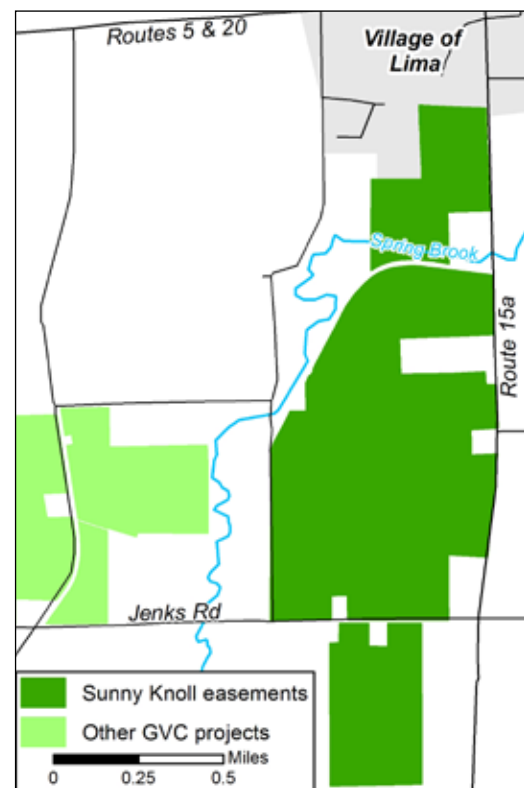
comfort knowing the future of our land.”

In 2010 the town of Lima completed a Town Farmland Protection Plan with the goal of supporting the viability of agriculture as an industry and protecting the land base needed to support farms. Further, the plans vision states that “agriculture enhances the quality of life for all Lima residents by contributing to a vibrant economy, maintaining open space, providing environmental benefits, and supplying the food and fiber essential to our lives.” **GVC**



*Landowners Don and Laurel Schenkel with brother’s Dick and Roger Gruschow (left to right) at the easement closing in the Conservancy office on June 19.*

BG



*The Sunny Knoll conservation easements protects 495 acres of contiguous productive farmland south of the Village of Lima, including 2 miles of scenic road frontage.*

## Hamilton Family Protects Bottom Lands

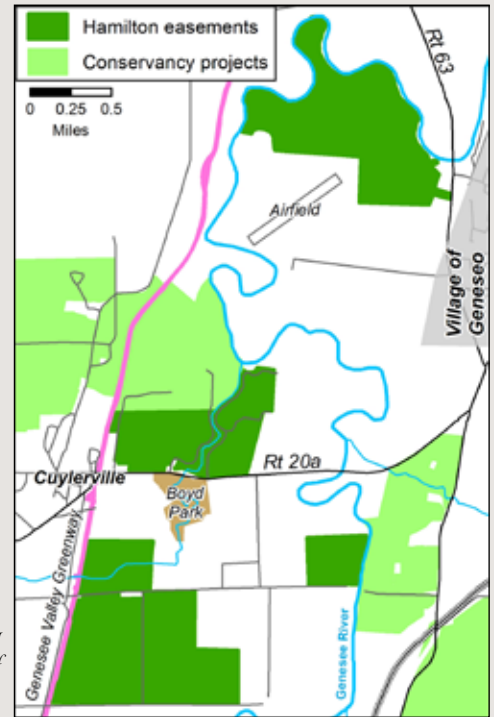
By David Bojanowski



The Conservancy is pleased to announce the permanent protection of 1,182 acres of the Hamilton family's farmland in the towns of Leicester and Geneseo. Three Hamilton families, brothers Roger and Randy and their aunt Evelyn, worked through a complicated State and Federally funded grant to place conservation easements on the highly productive bottomland of the Genesee River valley. The property is comprised of over 95% prime soils, worldwide the most productive of all soil categories, which will be protected from non-agricultural development in perpetuity. The property also protects three miles of frontage on the Genesee River in Geneseo and

Leicester. The Hamilton family has been in farming operation. As the newly appointed District 2 representative of the State Young Farmers & Ranchers Committee, Leslie values the permanency of protecting the farmland, noting "with all the development in the Geneseo area we can now set long range plans for the future of our farm and be a partner in securing the future of agriculture in New York State."

Much of the farmland is situated along the Genesee Valley Greenway. Protecting the Hamilton's farmland has the added benefit of preserving the rural scenic views that can be enjoyed by the public while using the Greenway. Views that make the Greenway such a great community resource. **GVC**



*The conservation easements protect 1,182 acres of Triple H Farm land in the towns of Geneseo and Leicester, much of which is adjacent to other protected lands.*

***“The property is comprised of over 95% prime soils... worldwide the most productive of all soil...”***

nearly two miles of frontage on Little Beards Creek in Leicester.

Brothers Roger and Randy Hamilton are second generation farmers who own and operate Triple H Farm. The farm currently grows corn, soybeans, peas and snap beans in the fertile valley floor and plans to continue the family farming tradition with the recent addition of Roger's daughter Leslie to the



*From left to right, project manager Rob Besanceney, brothers Randy and Roger Hamilton, Evelyn Hamilton, Livingston County Planning Director Angela Ellis and Genesee Valley Conservancy Land Conservator Dave Bojanowski. Not pictured is Evelyn's husband, the late Earl Hamilton, who was dedicated to farmland protection and helped start this project.*



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conservation within Livingston County. Examining the size, adjacency to protected lands, proximity to water resources, and significant natural habitats, I classified each parcel of land within the County by priority in terms of its importance for potential future conservation. Finally, I explored each town individually within the County and provided the necessary data and contact information for the highest priority land parcels so staff can reach out to these landowners.

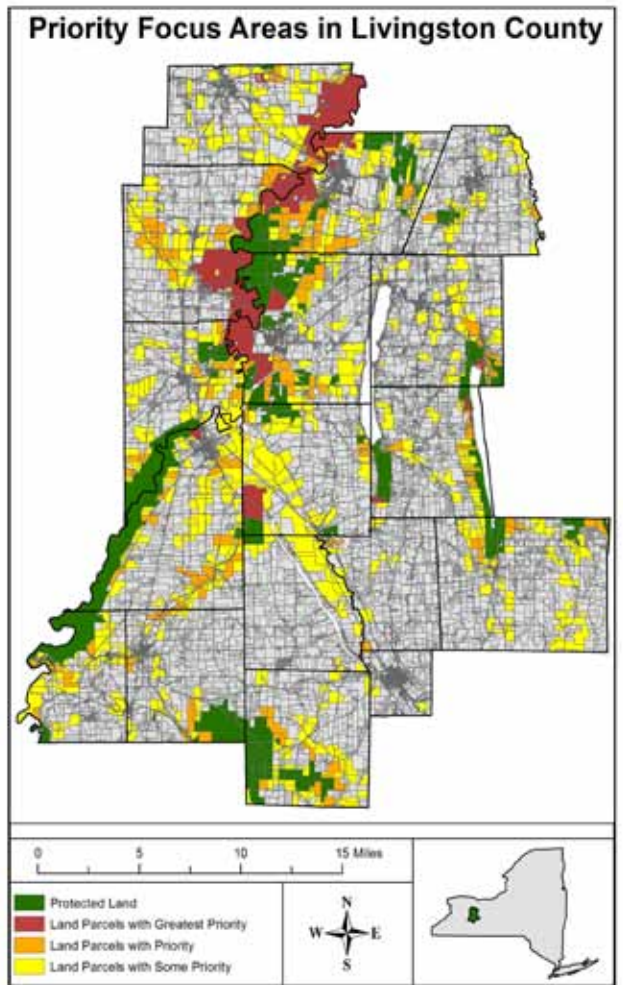
I take pride in sharing my work outside the office by presenting it at the local, regional, and national levels. My work has been very well-received and I have been fortunate enough to have presented it at the national Association of American Geographers (AAG) Conference in Chicago, the Geographic Information Sharing Special Interest Group (GIS/SIG) Conference in Rochester, and at SUNY Geneseo's GREAT (Geneseo Recognizing Excellence, Achievement, and Talent) Day. Additionally, my work was selected to be

used for the Presidential Inaugural Program for the incoming President of the college.

Largely due to my work with the Conservancy, I will continue to utilize GIS mapping at the Livingston County Planning Department next fall as part of another internship opportunity.

As my undergraduate career comes to an end this December, I look forward to spending my final semester assisting on another project with the Conservancy in the fall. The Conservancy has provided me with experience that has helped solidify my career path and has confirmed my long-term goals to use GIS as a profession. **GVC**

*Kevin used existing data sets to identify parcels that matched the Conservancy's habitat and open space conservation priorities.*



## Legacy Giving

*Make the Genesee Valley part of your legacy.*

Whether made during your lifetime or as part of your estate, a legacy gift is a one-time extraordinary contribution that propels conservation forward and will leave a lasting impact.

No matter the size, a legacy gift can help initiate new projects, fund larger undertakings and increase the pace of conservation locally, **protecting the places you love.**

Contact Ben Gajewski to discuss legacy giving  
585-243-2190  
ben@geneseevalleyconservancy.org

### Types of Gifts

- Cash
- Stock
- House & real-estate
- Retirement accounts
- Art & other collectables

### Potential Gift Uses

- Stewardship Endowment  
*to ensure permanence*
- Acquisition Fund  
*to protect new places*
- Preserve Maintenance  
*for GVC's nature preserves*

*If you have included Genesee Valley Conservancy in your estate planning, please let us know so we may understand your gift and wishes.*



# 2015 Nature Walks and Events

## July 11 - Genesee River Paddle (Free! Bring your own craft!)

Drop your gear behind the Genesee Valley Restaurant in Mt. Morris at 9am, then drive to and park at Indian Fort, shuttles will return you to Mt. Morris for the start of the paddle.

## August 7 - Silent Art Auction

Starting at 4pm. Bid on a variety of works featuring Habitat, Open Space, and Farmland by local artists. All items are framed and ready to hang!  
Visit our website for details and previews of each work!



For details visit:

[www.geneseevalleyconservancy.org](http://www.geneseevalleyconservancy.org)



## August 15 - Geology of Indian Fort Nature Preserve, 9am

Hosted by Dr. Jeff Over at Indian Fort Nature Preserve, Geneseo

## September 6 - Oak Tree Half Marathon & 5K Run/Walk, 8am

Registration opens June 1 at [www.geneseevalleyconservancy.org/race](http://www.geneseevalleyconservancy.org/race) Run, watch or volunteer!

## October 10 - Genesee Valley Hunt Races with Genesee Valley Hunt, 10am-4pm

Details at [geneseevalleyhunt.org/races](http://geneseevalleyhunt.org/races) These races take place on protected lands!

## October 23 - Bald Eagles: Rising from the Brink of Extinction, 7pm

Learn about the successful effort to keep eagles in NY from biologist Peter Nye. Members reserve your tickets today!

Join our e-mail list for more events like our Foliage Walk and Cross Country Ski!

*Many of these events are held with permission on private property, please respect landowners private property so we can continue these great events.*

Sponsored by

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Registration  
is open!

# The Oak Tree

Half Marathon  5k Run & Walk

September 6  
Geneseo, NY

[www.geneseevalleyconservancy.org/race](http://www.geneseevalleyconservancy.org/race)

We are including a donation envelope with each newsletter. Newsletters reach folks that are not members and may wish to support our work. Want to make a gift? Mail back the envelope!

## We're Hiring!

Position: Membership Coordinator

[www.geneseevalleyconservancy.org/about/hiring](http://www.geneseevalleyconservancy.org/about/hiring)

Or

## Volunteer:

Trail maintenance | Membership mailings | Event setup

Register Online  
Quick, easy, and  
no extra fees!





# Genesee Valley Conservancy

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[www.geneseevalleyconservancy.org](http://www.geneseevalleyconservancy.org)

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BG

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