

VIEWPOINTS

SPECIAL ISSUE:
A Campaign to Expand the
Bozen Kill Conservation Corridor



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LAND CONSERVANCY

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From the Executive Director



Mark King,
Executive Director

We have an exciting acquisition opportunity—a campaign to acquire property off Bond Road in Guilderland that will bring the Bozen Kill Conservation Corridor to nearly 700 acres. This is a moment MHLC has dreamed of reaching for 20 years, and we are so close to success.

The list of benefits from this project is long, and you can read about them in these pages, but one aspect of the project I find especially intriguing is human history on the land in the Bozen Kill Conservation Corridor. There are numerous indications of the more recent European history, but there is a much longer Native American history that is largely invisible today. Unfortunately, our knowledge of Native Americans' history with the land is limited, but we can readily observe the more recent signs of human activity from stone walls to cellar holes. And these are the only things that remain obvious. If we could go back in time we would view a very different landscape, one with far fewer trees, more agriculture, and the stream used for milling and power. Arthur Gregg, the former

Guilderland historian wrote of the Bozen Kill Corridor before the revolutionary war, "They [Van Auken Brothers] cut down with the aid of neighbors nearly forty acres of heavy woods, most of which was very large hard maples. This was left as it fell until next summer, when it was set on fire and burned for months."

Looking at the largely forested Bozen Kill Ravine today it is easy to think this kind of disturbance as only history, but as recently as the 1970s a "Save the Bozen Kill" campaign was formed to fight the possibility of routing Interstate 88 across the Bozen Kill Valley. Even more recently, logging occurred deep in the ravine with the stream used as a skid road for trees.

Today, you can have an influence on the next chapter of the Bozen Kill Ravine and perhaps capture a bit of what poet William Christman wrote about the Bozen Kill in 1926.

*The brook is swift and swollen,
The frail stars glance and gleam,
Where for an hour I've stolen
To dream and dream and dream*

I hope you will help us reach our goal and be rewarded with a great new place to explore and dream.



Photo: Wetlands of the Bond Road property.

Exploring the Bozen Kill

by Associate Director Sarah Walsh

In the summer of 2019, I geared up to do the annual monitoring of the Bozen Kill Preserve. I had my GPS and clipboard in hand, ready to walk the trails and take the red trail out to the end. It had been a warm summer, and there were many reports of black bears roaming in the area to find water sources—one such account at the Bozen Kill Preserve. Considering my timing, I would probably miss seeing the bear, but I was still vigilant on the trails.

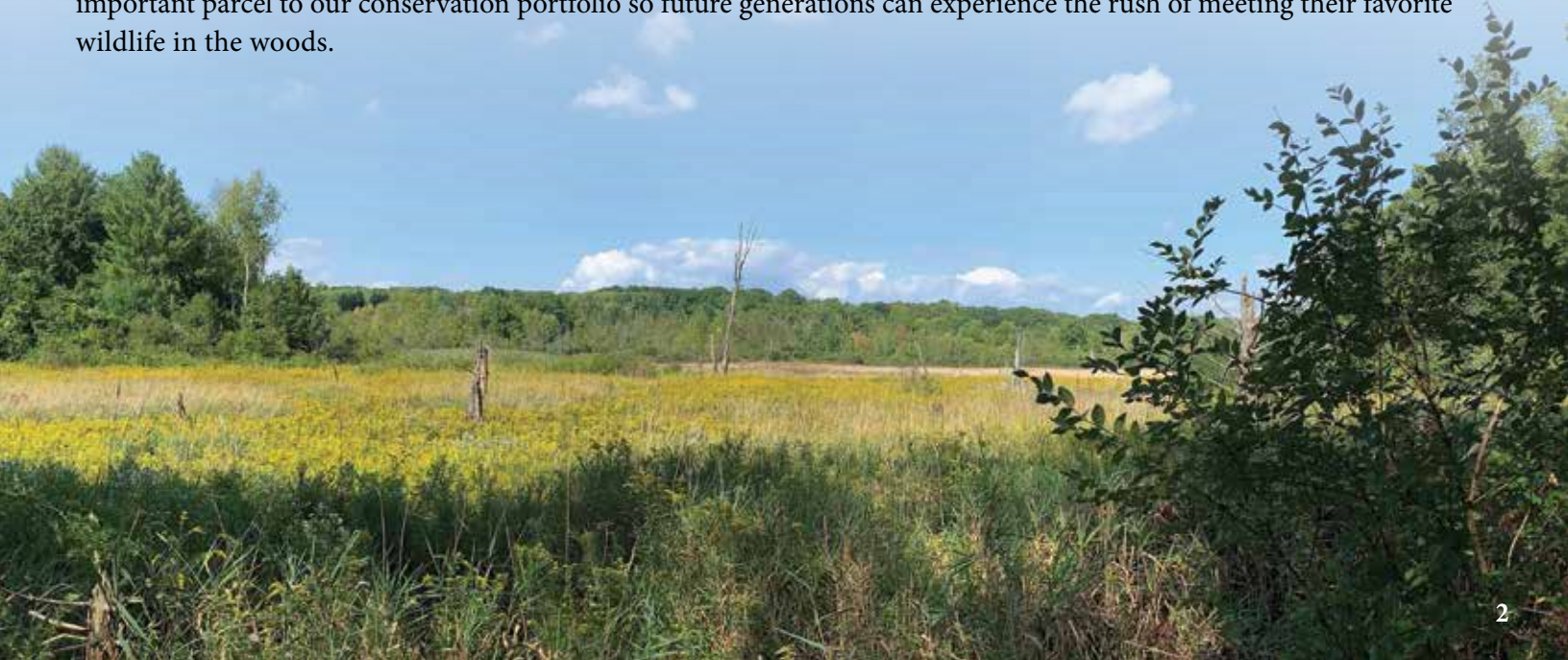
I was deep in my notes when I suddenly heard activity in the stream bed—the *plunk* and *plink* of moving rocks. I froze and turned my body towards the sound. Up from the stream bed came a small black bear. I had seen a black bear only once before while driving in the Adirondacks. And now, I was standing on the same ground as the bear with only my GPS unit and clipboard to protect me. I waited as the bear came up the bank's edge towards me. I could see its soft brown muzzle and curious brown eyes. I decided twenty yards away was close enough, and I raised my arms, yelling, “Hey, bear, hey, bear!” The bear spooked, turned on its heel, and raced away into the thick forest.

Rarely are we given a chance to share the landscape with these extraordinary animals, as human activity has negatively impacted these populations. The fact that black bears, bobcats, and fishers are still seen in their wild habitats in Albany County is because we have worked hard over the last three decades to ensure they have a place to roam. And our work to create safe passageways for wildlife continues.

The acquisition of the Bond Road lands will be the fourteenth parcel Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy has protected along the Bozen Kill; this stream runs into the Watervliet Reservoir, which serves 30,000 residents in the Town of Guiderland and the City of Watervliet. Our work along this important water quality corridor began in 1999 with the gift of the Maddux parcel, now part of the Bozen Kill Preserve. Since then, MHLC has worked with willing landowners to acquire, through land donations and purchases, the thirteen current parcels along the Bozen Kill Ravine, creating a 417-acre tract of protected lands.

Expanding the Bozen Kill Conservation Corridor is vital to protecting the tributaries and resilient lands of the Bozen Kill Ravine. These resilient areas are generally identified by having significant variation in topography, making for rugged terrain and elevation changes. Resilient areas will serve as a place of limited or slower change during disturbances such as major storm events and climate change. As climate changes, wildlife will seek out these resilient areas that retain the characteristics of their old habitats.

MHLC's work is an alternative to the path toward what some scientists argue is a *Sixth Extinction*—a crisis caused solely by human activity. It gives hope for our species and the future. We hope you will join us in raising funds to add this important parcel to our conservation portfolio so future generations can experience the rush of meeting their favorite wildlife in the woods.



Expanding the Bozen Kill Conservation Corridor

225-ACRE BOND ROAD PROPERTY, GUILDERLAND, NEW YORK

At the end of Bond Road in Guiderland, just up the hill from the Village of Altamont, two parcels of land are situated north of the Bozen Kill, one of 215 acres and separate 10-acre parcel within MHLC's Bozen Kill Preserve. The parcels, known as the Bond Road lands, lie within the larger Bozen Kill Conservation Corridor—a swath of protected lands between the Bozen Kill Preserve and Wolf Creek Falls Preserve, which is one of MHLC's priority protection areas.

For years, MHLC has sought to acquire the Bond Road lands to add to the 417-acre Bozen Kill Conservation Corridor. The two parcels are key pieces that would fill in significant gaps among the patchwork of lands we have previously protected along the Bozen Kill. The Bond Road property went up for sale in October of 2022. In an effort to allow MHLC time to raise the necessary funds, Laurie and Bryan Swift and another neighbor of the Bond Road lands stepped in to purchase the land.

With a deadline just months away, MHLC has launched a public campaign to raise funds to purchase and protect the 225 acre property. And, thanks to support from the current landowners as well as partner organizations Scenic Hudson and The Nature Conservancy, our fundraising goal is within reach.

Protecting Water Quality

Protection of the 225-acre Bond Road property will increase water quality protection for the Bozen Kill. Forest roots hold stream banks, preventing erosion in this rugged terrain and keeping waters cool and clean as they flow to the Watervliet Reservoir. Protection of water quality is critically important as the Watervliet Reservoir serves more than 30,000 residents in the Town of Guiderland and City of Watervliet with water from this source.

Protecting Climate

The Bozen Kill Conservation Corridor is identified by the Nature Conservancy as an area of high value for biological diversity and climate resiliency. The steep forested slopes and deep Bozen Kill Ravine provide space for wildlife to roam and shift in a changing climate. Resilient and connected areas are critical to ensuring clean water and habitat for wildlife and people as the climate changes. If acquired, this property will create a nearly 700-acre connected series of parcels conserved by Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy.

Protecting Wildlife

The property includes a diversity of habitat featuring extensive forest, a hemlock hardwood swamp, wetlands, and old agricultural fields. New York State records indicate this is a location that is particularly important to rare dragonflies and damselflies. The Bozen Kill Corridor is also identified in the New York State Open Space Plan as a conservation priority. Black bear, bobcats and fisher have graced this landscape—all animals that require large, protected tracts of land to carry out their life cycles.





The areas highlighted in green on this map are lands protected by MHLC along the Bozen Kill. MHLC's Wolf Creek Falls and Bozen Kill Preserves are outlined in yellow; the Bond Road parcels are outlined in orange. This area of protected land is referred to as the Bozen Kill Conservation Corridor.

The 225-acre property already has a trail system in place that has been maintained by neighbors for years. The wide trails and gentle terrain make it perfect for cross-country skiing. Reaching the highest elevation of the trail, you can enjoy expansive views of the village of Altamont and the city of Albany. MHLC plans to add a trail connecting this existing trail system to the Bozen Kill Preserve trails.

Most of the Bond Road property will remain wild with limited public access ensuring wildlife habitat remains undisturbed and their pathways through the 700-acre conservation corridor are open and safe.



Photos, left to right: Hikers enjoying autumn trails | Existing trails on Bond Road property, photo by T. Bessette | Bobcats are among the species that need large tracts of land for movement.



Bozen Kill Needs Your Support

Your commitment to funding this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity will make an impact that will ripple through generations.

Visit our website to watch a video about this project. You can learn more and make a donation at

WWW.MOHAWKHUDSON.ORG/BOZEN-KILL

Giving Outside the Box

In this issue, we are shining the spotlight on a few individuals who, in their own unique ways, have supported Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy's campaign to expand the Bozen Kill Conservation Corridor.

Marilyn & Norm Fancher

Marilyn and Norm Fancher are long-time MHLC supporters and volunteers. The couple has a long history of giving back to the community, volunteering in their local school district as classroom helpers and as soccer coaches for 20 years. They support many conservation organizations and have always enjoyed spending time in nature. Marilyn stopped by the MHLC office years ago to pick up a map and learn more about our local preserves they had been frequenting, and she and Norm have been deeply involved with MHLC ever since.

Before retirement, Marilyn was a microbiologist at Sterling-Winthrop/Sanofi and also worked in standardized patient care at Albany Med. Marilyn now volunteers at the hospital, the United Methodist Church in Delmar, and has led nature programs for the Scouts. Since joining MHLC, Marilyn has volunteered for many workdays and events. She has led hikes, participated in clean-ups, painted wood cutouts for our scavenger hunt events, stuffed envelopes... the list goes on!

Norm, a retired a dry waller and contractor, continues his fine craftsmanship in many ways from woodworking to sewing and quilting. He sews tote bags and laundry bags, which he donates to charity. Norm has shared his talents a skilled woodworker, making dozens of sign-in boxes for our preserves, housing to frame the "POSTED" signs, and other handcrafted items used by MHLC.

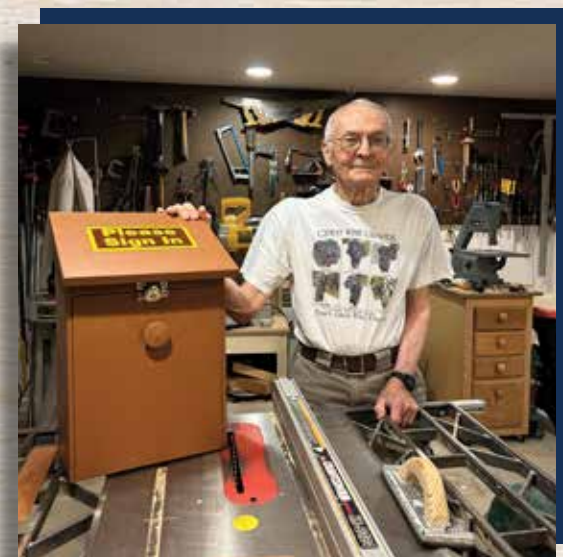
This summer, the Fanchers hosted a special garage sale to help raise money for MHLC's land projects. Their goal was not only to raise money, but also to raise awareness of MHLC's work. In the weeks leading up to the sale, they gathered items to sell donated from friends and neighbors. Marilyn said, "The items quickly overfilled our garage's capacity, then we started piling items in the house. The sale was a huge effort, but we were thrilled with the result."

After the sale, Marilyn stopped by our office and proudly passed us a check for the entire amount of the garage sale profits, a most impressive \$1,022.25! The Fancher's donation will go directly into MHLC's new campaign to expand the Bozen Kill Conservation Corridor.

Marilyn said, "Spending time in nature has really added joy to my retirement. Hiking the trails always lifts my spirits, and I am happy to share my love of the natural world with others."



Marilyn Fancher prepares for a garage sale to benefit MHLC. Photo by Sonja Stark.



In his basement workshop, Norm Fancher completes a wooden sign-in box for the MHLC preserves.

Brett Pulliam and Family

If you've rested upon a sturdy bench along the trails of your favorite preserve, you've enjoyed the handiwork of MHLC supporter Brett Pulliam. Over the years, Brett has built dozens of beautifully crafted wood benches for the MHLC preserves, yet his connection to these lands goes much deeper.

The Pulliam Family has a unique tie to the Bozen Kill Conservation Corridor. Brett shared the family's history, writing, "My grandfather moved his young family to Bozenkill Road in the 1930s. I moved onto part of the family farm in the 1980s to start and raise my family. Over the years, my cousins and I would spend a lot of time exploring the Bozen Kill valley. So needless to say, it is a special place for all of us."

Brett had connected a cousin with MHLC in the early 2000s when they were interested in selling property in the corridor. He also encouraged his father and his Aunt Darcy into donating some of their property to the MHLC. To build support from neighbors in the Bozen Kill valley, MHLC reached out to Brett with news of the upcoming campaign to purchase the Bond Road lands. Eager to help, Brett shared the news with his large family. "In my email to them, I reminded them of my Uncle Todd's efforts to save the Bozen Kill when a plan to route I-88 through the Bozen Kill was floated in the 70s. He was very active in that movement, and we all recalled the poster that hung in the family house that said "Save The Bozen Kill" with a silhouette of the waterfalls in black and white."

Brett's family responded to his email with an outpouring of support, and they sent donations toward the purchase of the Bond Road lands. MHLC is grateful to Brett and the entire Pulliam family for their generosity and for sharing our goal to protect this critical conservation corridor.



Brett Pulliam presents a donation from members of the Pulliam family.

Tom Bessette

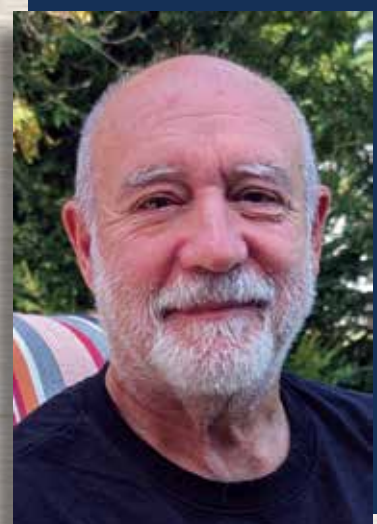
You may recognize the name Tom Bessette from photo credits appearing under some beautiful images in past MHLC publications ...*and the cover of this special issue!* Tom has been a photographer in one form or another for over 50 years. Before retiring nearly four years ago, Tom was a computer software instructor at the University at Albany for 22 years. He holds an MFA in photography from the State University of New York at New Paltz and a BA from Saint Rose in Albany.

Since retiring, Tom and his wife Kim travel extensively and have been to Scotland, Churchill (Manitoba), Iceland, and Alaska, in addition to a lot of camping in the Adirondacks. On his own, Tom has also been to Lake Clark National Park, to NatHab's Bear Camp, and again to Churchill for polar bears. (*You can explore Tom's collection of photographs from his adventures on his website, www.tombessette.com.*)

In addition to their travels, Tom and Kim are committed to giving back to the community through volunteer work. Tom's connection to MHLC came through a mutual friend of Mark King's. The Bessettes enjoy hiking MHLC's trails and strongly believe in and support our conservation work.

Despite facing the challenges of recovering from a stroke a few years ago, Tom has never turned down a request for photographs. He has generously granted MHLC permission to use images from his extensive collection. Tom has gone the extra mile, quite literally, by making special trips to some of our preserves to capture specific photographs essential for the organization's publications. He recently met Laurie and Bryan Swift at the Bond Road property to photograph the land.

Having great images is so important to help convey our work, and MHLC is thrilled to have Tom as a partner, bringing the lands we love into focus.



Tom Bessette, photographed by his wife, Kim Bessette.

Species Spotlight: Prickly Ash

by Stewardship Coordinator Marshall Lefebvre

I have been fortunate to get to know the State of New York in depth over the past decade... at least those parts which are green and wild. These are the endlessly variable spaces that lie just over the hedge, with a depth of diversity that extends beyond the curve of vision, no matter how far you look. We are all fortunate to have these spaces just beyond our back doors, with the Capital Region somehow perfectly situated to offer entry to all those endless green aisles and passages.

I can wax poetic because I'm the lucky one that wanders our protected natural spaces. I get to watch as the curve comes around, and I can tell you that we live in a very special place. Among the many Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy preserves that hold my gaze, Hollyhock Hollow Sanctuary is one that keeps it the longest. "The longer you look, the more you'll see," applies here.

This *Species Spotlight* brings forward one that is easily overlooked. It might not catch your eye until it catches your clothing, being rather inconspicuous and even blindingly abundant in some areas. This is *Zanthoxylum americanum*, the prickly ash. This is another instance of a misleading common name as this isn't an ash tree at all. Prickly ash is, in fact, a member of the *Rutaceae* family, a group better known as the citrus family! The prickly ash, believe it or not, is our northern-most native citrus. Even more surprising is its very close relation to the Szechuan peppercorns, which are cultivated from several other species in the *Zanthoxylum* genus. Just like the Szechuan peppercorns, the foliage and fruits of prickly ash produce a strongly spicy and lemony aroma. Note that these are not closely related to the common black peppercorn as seen on every dinner table, which is derived from plants in a different family entirely.

If *Zanthoxylum americanum* isn't enough to deaden your tongue, you'll find "toothache tree" just as difficult if you use it as Native Peoples did by chewing it for its

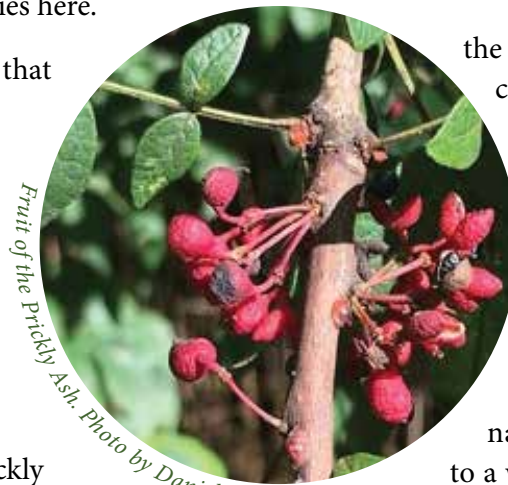
mouth-numbing properties. There are many espoused homeopathic remedies for this plant beyond its culinary virtues, which I'll leave to the reader to explore further. Caveat lector and blanket advice: I encourage due diligence before putting strange things in your mouth.



Compound leaves



Prickly Ash flowers. Photo by Helen Lowe Metzmann.



Fruit of the Prickly Ash. Photo by Daniel Spada.

Prickly ash does hold some resemblance to ash trees, as the leaves are compound and pinnate with up to 11 leaflets. Unlike ash trees, the branching is alternate rather than opposite. This is a shrubby species with a maximum height near 25 feet. With its thicket-forming habit, compound leaves, and thorn-like protrusions, it's likely the prickly ash might also be confused for black or honey locust. Prickly ash is a dioecious plant, meaning that separate male and female plants are produced, the flowers of which are small (under ¼ inch), and yellowish green. The seeds, produced midsummer, are also quite small, forming in clusters at the base of the leaves, but with deep red coloration in the fruit.

Prickly ash can take root in a variety of habitats, from low to upland mesic forests and wet thickets. The population at Hollyhock Hollow has proliferated quite well amongst the thin soils and limestone karst. As with all native flora, this plant is important to a wide number of animals, being a preferred host for the caterpillars of the giant swallowtail butterfly and is often swarmed with pollinators during flowering periods. The fruit is consumed by most of the local birds and mammals.

The longer you look, the more you'll see. Be sure to take your time and reach out with all your senses while visiting our preserves. You'll be surprised by the fascinating stories and histories of the things that might otherwise be ignored.

You can find more "Species Spotlight" blog posts on our website at www.mohawkhudson.org/blog/!



Trail Team Triumphs

Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy volunteers bring many skills and strengths to bear for our preserve projects, from practical expertise like carpentry and building to fundraising, policy guidance, and land management. This summer, our volunteers were asked to put a new skill to the test: *buoyancy*.

Boaters and paddlers answered the call to assemble the MHLC fleet in response to an infestation of water chestnut (*Trapa natans*) at the Restifo Sanctuary, a pocket preserve outside the town of Westerlo in southern Albany County. Water chestnut (not the scrumptious canned vegetable) is a highly aggressive aquatic invasive species that rapidly chokes waterways by completely carpeting the water's surface. This plant is also known as the water caltrop because of its distinctive hard-shelled and wickedly pointed seed pods.

Control methods for this plant vary from chemical to mechanical removals. At MHLC, our strength lies in the community, and water chestnut doesn't stand a chance against our eagle-eyed floating armada. Over two workdays, with beautiful August weather, volunteers brought their kayaks and canoes and hit the surf, hand-pulling the water chestnut before it could drop mature seeds. Working in tandem with shore crews, the team removed roughly twelve cubic yards of vegetation! This is wet and slimy work with a few mysterious biting insects, but spirits were high, and the resulting change to the water's surface was striking. Complete eradication of aquatic invasives is nearly impossible, but with repeated efforts like these, we can keep the infestations at bay and maintain the health and beauty of our preserves. The "MHLC Navy" will need to revisit the Restifo Sanctuary over the next few seasons to address the remnant and reseeded water chestnut plants. The good news is that work will be easier with each return as the plant populations diminish.

Entering the 2024 stewardship season, MHLC will be narrowing our sights on some of the key invasive species sweeping through the Capital Region. The impacts of invasive species expand well beyond property boundaries, and every effort to combat these threats to our local ecosystems has a rippling effect on the surrounding areas. By joining MHLC in these efforts, you can have a far-reaching impact on improving the natural areas that are so vital to a thriving community.

We will be offering many opportunities to learn how to identify and manage invasive species in the coming seasons. Please help us by spreading the word and floating on down to our preserves to join the effort to protect the open spaces we all rely on!



A Celebration for Conservation

MHLC's Annual Fall Fundraiser was held at Orchard Creek Golf Club in Altamont, on Thursday, September 14. Our biggest fundraising event of the year drew more than 200 guests for a festive evening of camaraderie in celebration of Capital Region conservation.

MHLC Board Chair Sarah Carroll and Vice Chair Charlie Kruzansky welcomed guests and announced Sarah's departure from the Board in December 2023, as her 9-year term comes to an end. Executive Director Mark King hosted the annual awards ceremony, highlighting the honorees' significant contributions to local conservation and our communities: Hank Stebbins and Val Washington, 2023 Event Honorees; Linda Stein, in memory of Ben Stein, recipients of the Dan Driscoll Volunteer Leadership Award; and Drs. Peter Kelly and Barbara Kapuscinska, recipients of the Saving Special Places Award.

The big announcement of the evening highlighted MHLC's exciting opportunity to protect the 225-acre Bond Road property and expand the Bozen Kill Conservation Corridor to nearly 700 acres.

Following the program, guests were treated to a delicious buffet dinner and dessert served by Settles Hill Catering, plus apple cider donuts from Altamont Orchards and gluten-free cookies donated by Different Blend Bakery.

The Annual Fall Fundraiser provides critical funding to support MHLC's day-to-day efforts protecting and stewarding the natural lands of our region. The event also serves as an opportunity for supporters, friends, and neighbors to gather in-person and celebrate their shared passion for environmental conservation. Over \$70,000 was raised through the Fall Fundraiser and the virtual silent auction. We extend our sincere gratitude to all guests, honorary committee members, sponsors, and auction donors for their generous contributions toward the success of the Fall Fundraiser!

Photos, top to bottom: Event Honorees, Val Washington and Hank Stebbins. | Mark King and Board Chair Sarah Carroll with Honorary Committee Co-chairs, Keth Lee and Jim Gaughan. | Sarah Walsh with Harris Eisenhardt and Ruth Bonn, members of the Schenectady Nature Bus team.

Save the Date!

Winter Solstice Hike

Thursday, December 21, from 2 - 4 PM
Normans Kill West Preserve

Join MHLC staff to celebrate the first day of winter at our 2nd Annual Winter Solstice Hike. We'll enjoy the trails at Normans Kill West Preserve, including the brand new staircase at the preserve entrance built by volunteers this summer.

First Day Hike

Monday, January 1, 2024, 12 - 2 PM
Location TBA

Start the new year with a walk in nature! First Day Hikes are popping up across the nation—you can participate by joining us at an MHLC Preserve. Stay tuned to our events calendar for details.

www.mohawkhudson.org/events

RISE TO THE CHALLENGE

Protect the Bozen Kill

With support from private donors and community partners, we are well on our way to raising the \$550,000 needed to protect the Bond Road lands and expand the Bozen Kill Conservation Corridor. But we need your help to reach the finish line.

We are thrilled to announce that our first \$15,000 match challenge has been met! **There is still time to support MHLC's Bozen Kill Campaign and have your gift matched.** Two anonymous donors have offered a \$40,000 matching challenge extension to help MHLC reach its fundraising goal. Every gift toward the Bozen Kill Campaign will be matched dollar-for-dollar, up to \$40,000, by December 31, 2023. Your support today will go twice as far in helping MHLC protect the Bond Road lands.

Our deadline is approaching quickly; step up to the challenge today and help MHLC protect the Bond Road lands for the further protection of water quality, climate, and the many species who call this beautiful region home.

Learn more and donate online at www.mohawkhudson.org/bozen-kill

An Update on Current Projects

Nature Bus: A Growing Success

2023 was a spectacular year for Nature Bus. With Albany Nature Bus expanded to 20 weeks of free Saturday service to fit in leaf peeping and the addition of MHLC's new ADA accessible trail in partnership with DEC's Five Rivers to the route, we expect to set a new record for the number of riders reached this year.

MHLC also launched the Schenectady Nature Bus in partnership with the Capital District Transportation Authority and ECOS of Schenectady. The team is making preparations for expanding this line in 2024.



Community members ride the Schenectady Nature Bus to Fox Preserve.

Nature Bus Albany would not be possible without support from the Albany Pine Bush Preserve Commission, the NYS Environmental Protection Fund through the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation's Bureau of Environmental Education, and Adirondack Mountain Club, Albany Chapter.

Special thanks to The Schenectady Foundation, Stewart's Shops, the Schenectady County Incentive Program, and the Village of Scotia who made the pilot season of Schenectady Nature Bus possible.

Stay tuned for more news on Nature Bus including final numbers and a **2024 First Day Hike** schedule to kick off your New Year with time outside and a greener commute!

What's Happening at Bender?

This fall, you may have noticed heavy machinery near the old farmstead at Bender Melon Farm Preserve. We have been busy cleaning up the farmstead and preparing for other upcoming improvements we hope to unveil in 2024.

Check out the updated StoryMap to see our progress so far and get a sneak peek at some major projects coming soon!





MOHAWK HUDSON
LAND CONSERVANCY

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Fall 2023

OUR MISSION

To conserve and steward lands
and waters of the Mohawk
and Hudson River Valleys for
the benefit of people and the
environment.

Name a Special Space

Leave a lasting impact with your gift toward
the **Bozen Kill Campaign!** MHLC has limited
opportunities to name special spaces
at the Bond Road lands, including trails,
benches, a kiosk, and picnic tables.

Contact MHLC for more information
on naming opportunities and endowed gifts.

(518) 436-6346 | connect@mohawkhudson.org

