

GREENWAYS

Newsletter of the
Delaware and Raritan Greenway
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In Perpetuity

The Institute Lands: Where Natural and Human History Meet

BY DAVID LAMOTTE

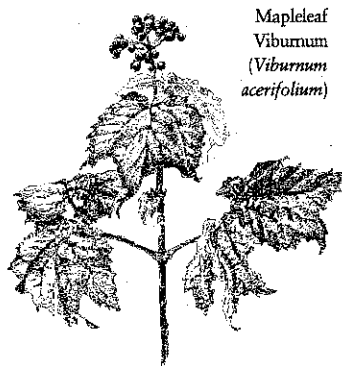
Great horned owls nesting in the wounded trunk of a 250-year-old beech tree; a frosting of wildflowers thrown one May night over the floodplain of Stony Brook; a farmhouse nestled in fields that it has overlooked for more than 200 years. . . .

These are images characteristic of "The Institute Lands," more than 550 acres of undeveloped forest and field owned by the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton. These lands are remarkable both for the vitality and diversity of their natural history and for the important role they have played in Princeton's human history, dating back to the original Friends settlement of Stony Brook in 1696.

Located at the confluence of Stony Brook and the D&R Canal, the Institute Lands form a keystone in central New Jersey's network of green spaces. They adjoin and unite the Rogers Wildlife Refuge to the north, the D&R Canal State Park to the east, and the Princeton Battlefield State Park to the west. They extend southward to the farm fields and woodlands on both sides of Quaker Road. Together, these properties form the last extensive, unbroken tract of forest and field on the Route 1 corridor.

The northern half of the Institute Lands is covered by a mixed forest known to generations of Princetonians as "The Institute Woods." The diversity of tree species in this 250-acre tract makes the Institute Woods "a virtual laboratory for studies of forest succession," according to Henry Horn, professor of biology at Princeton University. Because of a variety of drainage patterns and a varied history of abandonment from human cultivation, the Woods contain several distinct "stands" or types of forest, ranging from a virgin beech forest with gray trunks as tall and somber as cathedral arches to crowded stands of aspen and birch on lands that were cultivated fields less than 100 years ago.

In addition to their significance for ecological studies, the Institute Woods are a renowned bird sanctuary. They are one of the last stands of undisturbed forest on the fall line, the geological boundary between rolling upland and coastal plain. Consequently, the Institute Woods act as a magnet for songbirds migrating along the East Coast flyway. In May, the high canopy of Tulip-trees, oaks, and hickories is alive with warblers—more than 30 species at a time—and the network of public trails through



Mapleleaf
Viburnum
(*Viburnum
acerifolium*)

Continued on page 3

Inside

From the Director
Conservation Techniques
D&R Greenway and the
Institute Lands

Grants for Private Landowners

Encourage public use of privately owned open space

The Office of Natural Lands Management has announced the availability of Open Lands Management Grants to private landowners for passive outdoor recreation projects. Some of the projects eligible for funding include hiking and nature trails, fishing and canoe access, bridle paths and picnic sites. A maximum grant of \$7,000 is recommended for each project during 1993.

If you or anyone you know are interested in applying for a grant, contact the Open Lands Management Program staff to request an application form. They will assist you in developing projects and filling out the application. They will also meet with landowners and neighbors to talk about the program, and speak to groups about adopting a project.

Applications will only be accepted between February 22-26, 1993. Grant awards will be made within thirty days receipt of the application.

Twenty-five sites throughout the State are currently open to the public under the Open Lands Management Program, with more expected to be opening soon. One of those sites will be D&R Greenway's new McBurney Woods Preserve!

For more information and for the application materials, call (609) 984-1339. ☎

From the Director

MAUDE BACKES SNYDER
Executive Director

Delaware & Raritan Greenway is entering its fifth year as a leader in regional land conservancy. My guide in measuring the difference we've made is by looking at what hasn't changed! At least not visibly. A good example is our first, and ongoing, project—the Stony Brook Greenway.

The land we've preserved along the 21-mile Stony Brook may undergo subtle natural changes, but thanks to the farsightedness and generosity of the landowners we've worked with, hundreds of acres of sensitive lands will never be developed. There's a lot of land left to be preserved, and we're still working to create an uninterrupted buffer along this beautiful stream.

I'm especially excited to announce our purchase of a

178-acre property in East Amwell. "McBurney Woods Preserve" cradles the headwaters of the Stony Brook and harbors a great variety of animal and plant life. The Sourland Mountains area is considered "an avian paradise with out peer in the region;" a habitat for red fox, woodchucks, turtles, copperheads, and possibly black bears (*The Sourland Legacy Report*). My favorite find, on a walk through the area, was a rare native species of toothwort, *Dentaria heterophyllum*. By preserving undisturbed woodlands along sensitive stream corridors we can help ensure the survival of central New Jersey's rare species.

Downstream from McBurney Woods Preserve, near where the Stony Brook ends, lie the Institute

for Advanced Study lands. These farms and woodlands provide an oasis amidst the rapid development along Route 1. Permanent protection of the Institute Lands is critical to the well-being of our region; its open lands and woods are an essential and healthy final passageway for waters flowing from the Stony Brook's headwaters.

Linking the Institute Lands to the McBurney Woods Preserve is the Stony Brook Greenway—a vision of D&R Greenway made possible by the cooperation of township planning agencies, volunteer land conservation groups, farmers, and corporate and residential landowners.

I'm pleased to introduce this first issue of our new newsletter. Through it we will keep you up-to-date on our progress, inform you of important land conservancy issues, and describe ways in which you can be part of our regional Greenway effort. Enjoy! 🍀

Conservation Techniques

Greenway building made easy

Over the past two years more than 500 acres of land have been permanently protected from development through the efforts of D&R Greenway. This remarkable feat is a direct response to local concerns. Throughout the country land conservancy groups are combining creative strategies and sound economic principles to satisfy a common community mandate: find ways to protect undeveloped lands.

Initial response to successful programs has ranged from embracing enthusiasm to vehement opposition. "In many people's

minds," writes John Roush in *Exchange*, the Journal of the Land Trust Alliance, "... a shared right to a livable environment is incompatible with private rights to acquire and use property."

We have encountered that very reaction from landowners and municipal agencies. However, once we guide people through the various ways of conserving land, they often feel that they are protecting, not giving up, their property rights.

In each issue of the Greenway newsletter we will write about the mechanics of land conservation, which, like many machines, becomes

far simpler to understand when taken apart! Topics will include:

- a close look at conservation easements,
- bargain sale purchases,
- limited development,
- trail easements,
- the role of private and public agencies,
- Green Acres funding,
- tax regulations,
- zoning issues,
- how to initiate preservation of your land.

If you would like to know more about how you can become part of our regional stream corridor greenway, please call us at (609) 452-1441. We can provide you with more information, and discuss the conservation process. 🍀

In Perpetuity

Continued from page 1

the woods is humming with bird-watchers who have traveled almost as far as the birds to make this annual rendez-vous.

By early June, the understory of Spicebush, Flowering Dogwood, and American Holly is in full leaf, providing sufficient cover for the Wood Thrush, Ovenbird, and other forest species that nest there. Some 100 bird species breed in the Woods, and twice that number have been observed there, including such endangered species as the Barred Owl and Bald Eagle.

However, the most remarkable feature of The Institute Lands may well be the graceful interaction of natural and human history that they represent. The southern portion of the property is a mixed landscape of farm fields, woods, and wetlands that would be familiar to Washington's troops, who marched across them in 1777, and even to their first European stewards, the members of the Friends community of Stony Brook, who arrived here in 1696. The Institute property encircles Eno House, the oldest remaining home from that original settlement; it also adjoins the Friends Meeting House itself, originally constructed in 1726, rebuilt after fire in 1760, and still an active meeting today. The Updike Farm, one of the houses on the Institute property along Quaker Road, dates from before the Revolutionary War.

The tranquil fields and woods of the Institute property make up the fabric that binds these historic structures and sites, enhancing their meaning by preserving their historic setting. The historical significance of the Institute property has been formally acknowledged by its inclusion in the "Princeton Battlefield/Stony Brook Village Historical District" in both the State and National Registers of Historical Places.

Over the years since its founding in 1930, the Institute for Advanced Study has gradually acquired these acres of forest and field to strengthen the Institute's endowment and to provide a peaceful, natural setting for the intense intellectual activity of the Institute's fellows. Under the Institute's enlightened stewardship, these lands have been open to the public for walking, jogging, birdwatching, and nature study. In recognition of this public service, the State of New Jersey has granted the Institute a property tax exemption under the state Green Acres program. Since this arrangement does not protect these lands from future development, a coalition of local and regional conservation groups is seeking permanent preservation of the Institute property (see the accompanying box).

Right now the fields are brown and bare, the great trees etched against the winter sky. A walker's eye travels through the leafless understory as through a mist. Here, the recent storm that caused such damage to human habitation downed dead trees and pruned weakened limbs; floodwaters along Stony Brook swept the litter from the forest floor. Among these woods and fields, the storm's work is a kind of healing; the bareness holds a promise. Soon the owls will find a new hollow for their nest, the wildflowers will suddenly appear where the floodwaters have been, and the Upton Farm will smile again on its greening fields. 🍀

David LaMotte is a poet, teacher, and doctoral student in English at Princeton University. He has spent many hours in the Institute Woods, claiming to be researching his dissertation on "American Poet-Naturalists and the Poetics of Place."



Milkweed
(*Asclepias syriaca*)



Tulip-tree
(*Liriodendron tulipifera*)

D&R Greenway and the Institute Lands

D&R Greenway, Inc. has held the preservation of the Institute Lands as its top priority since its incorporation in 1989. D&R Greenway has been working on this project over the last 4 years, packaging an acquisition proposal that involves governmental, nonprofit, and private monies:

- With Township support, Greenway drafted a successful proposal to the New Jersey State Green Acres program, which resulted in the reservation of \$7.5 million in outright grants and low-interest loans for use by Princeton Township—the largest single award to any municipality in the history of the program.

- The coordinated efforts of D&R Greenway and the Delaware and Raritan Canal Commission resulted in \$2 million in Green Acres funding for direct state acquisition of land in the Port Mercer area, with the Institute property as first priority.

- Additionally, \$500,000 in matching funds for acquisition was awarded to D&R Greenway contingent upon its raising an equal amount of funding from private sources.

- D&R Greenway commissioned a study that demonstrated that preserving the Institute Lands would have a long term, beneficial fiscal impact on the Township.

- D&R Greenway continued the preservation effort by building a coalition of nonprofit groups and concerned individuals to assist in raising public awareness and the necessary funding. Various local and regional groups are involved in this effort, including: Friends of Princeton Open Space, Stony Brook-Millstone Watershed Association, New Jersey Audubon Society, Washington Crossing Audubon Society, Port Mercer Civic Association, Sierra Club/Central New Jersey Group, Lawrence Township Conservation Foundation, Princeton Friends-Quaker Meeting, and the D&R Canal Watch.

Taking advantage of this proposed \$10 million in funding will require a commitment from all the above groups and strong public backing. D&R Greenway will continue bringing together those dedicated to this vital project, and providing the expertise to insure that their commitments result in permanent preservation of the Institute Lands. 🍀

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Delaware & Raritan Greenway, Inc., is a regional, 501(c)(3) nonprofit land conservancy dedicated to the preservation of a continuous open-space network enveloping central New Jersey's waterways and unified by the Delaware and Raritan Canal State Park.

D&R Greenway began in 1987 as an alliance of regional nonprofit groups, and was incorporated in 1989.

Our thanks to . . .

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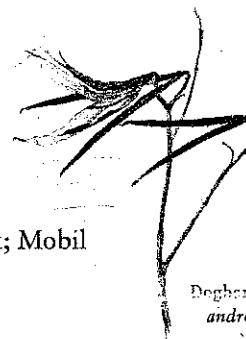
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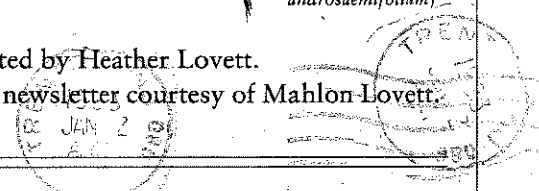
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Degener (Abies) *androsaemifolium*



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