

OCONEE RIVER LAND TRUST *news*

Preserving natural areas in our region since 1993

Winter 2016

DIRECTOR'S UPDATE

Nature—It's Good for You

It's always nice to have a little science to back up a firmly held belief: According to the January 2016 issue of National Geographic, **nature is good for you**, even if all you do is look at it! The article, *This is Your Brain on Nature*, explores the connection between the natural environment and human health. Studies show that just seeing greenspace or simply walking in a forest reduces stress. One scientist called it the "happiness effect."



A nice thing about ORLT's land conservation work is that we get to participate in creating this happy effect, and the end of 2015 found us very busy and happy! ORLT completed 20 conservation easements protecting 4,430 acres. ORLT has now protected more than 16,000 acres of natural forest, wetlands, and working lands in Georgia. Newly protected properties include working forests in Meriwether County, farms in Newton County, granite outcrops throughout Georgia, a 23-acre island off the coast of Savannah, and extensive tupelo swamps in Newton County. In addition to its easement work, in October 2015 ORLT received a generous grant from the Riverview Foundation to purchase a 14-acre tract adjacent to Athens Clarke County's Beech Haven greenspace property along the Middle Oconee. We are working to donate that tract to ACC in 2016, protected by a conservation easement. ACC hopes to some day open Beech Haven to the public.

We are gearing up for new projects in 2016, including partnering with Georgia DNR staff to protect one of Georgia's most threatened micro-environments, a rare pitcher plant bog in southeast Georgia. The Turner Foundation granted \$10,000 to ORLT to kick-start permanent protection of the bog. In addition to new projects, ORLT's land steward is beginning the annual required monitoring of all 72 conservation properties.

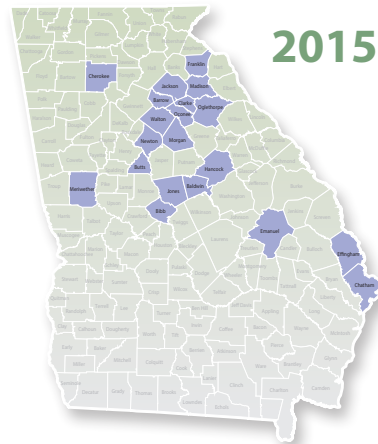
Watch for news about ORLT's annual event, to be held at Terrapin Brewery on Friday, March 18.

I look forward to seeing you outside!

—Steffney Thompson



Protected island off the coast of Savannah



Counties where ORLT holds easements

2015 By The Numbers

2015 Statistics:

- 20 Conservation Easements Established
- 1 Property Purchased
- 4,430 Acres Conserved

Conservation Easement Totals:

- 72 Conservation Easements
- 16,200 Acres Conserved
- Approximately 25 Miles of Rivers and Streams
- Approximately 75 Acres of Granite Outcrops

Squam Rock: A Story of Land Protection

By Hans Neuhauser



Squam Rock Land Trust

When I was a child, I grew up in a neighborhood next to an open tract of land that was used by everyone – as a pathway to the beach, as a place to play capture the flag and kick the can and whose signature granite outcrop served to separate the boys and girls who had not learned how to climb it from the young men and women who had. The land was a community asset, but it was slowly being encroached upon by development. Visionaries in the community decided to form a land trust and acquire the property, making access available to everyone. That was more than sixty years ago; you can still

go to Squam Rock and try to climb it; you can enjoy the meadows and swim from its beach.

The Oconee River Land Trust is like that, saving land that is important to the community. ORLT is part of a national conservation system that rivals Federal parks, National Forests and state parks in the effectiveness of its conservation of important natural lands. It's an awesome responsibility but the rewards are great. Be a participant by volunteering your time and/or donating funds. Don't be an observer; get involved in protecting land you love.

(Hans Neuhauser is an ORLT board member who grew up in Massachusetts)

Butterfly Discovery

Dr. James W. Porter unveiled a recent discovery regarding Tallassee Tract butterflies at the March 3rd Oconee Rivers Audubon Society meeting. Dr. Porter reported the discovery of three closely related and similar looking Satyr butterfly species at Tallassee. Co-occurring “cryptic” species are common in the tropics but rare in the north temperate zone. These species rely on sensitive habitats in Tallassee’s river corridor including bottomland forest with open understory, edge areas between floodplain, and adjacent hardwood forest and canebrakes. ORLT holds a conservation easement on the Tallassee Tract and is participating in landowner Athens-Clarke County’s effort to create a public park.

This exciting discovery will be discussed again in mid-May by Dr. Porter at a talk titled “The Watercolorist John Abbott and Georgia Butterflies.” The event will be held at UGA’s Special Collections Library and is free and open to the public. ORLT will announce the time and date on Facebook when details are confirmed.



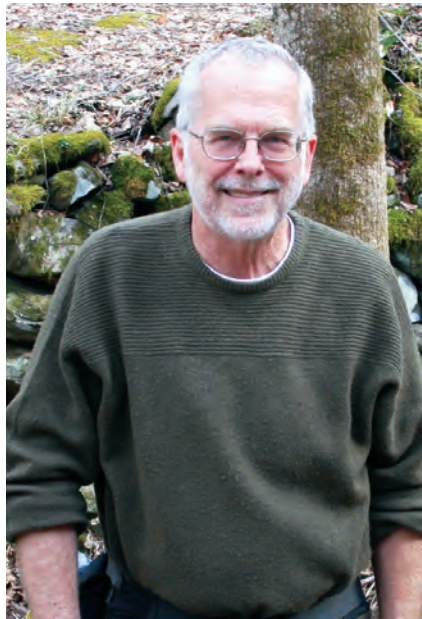
Jim Porter

Creole Pearly Eye Resting on Rivercane at the Tallassee Tract.



Welcome Smith Wilson, New Board Chair

We are pleased to announce that Smith Wilson is the new Board Chair of ORLT. A board member since 2001, he is an integral part of ORLT's conservation success and growth. As President of S & W Development, Inc., much of his career involves historic preservation work in Athens and the surrounding areas. He has worked on projects ranging from moving a log home to Sandy Creek Nature Center to moving an antebellum home to the country for retired rock stars. Smith is a seasoned non-profit board member having held leadership roles with the Athens Clarke Heritage Foundation, Sandy Creek Nature Center, Georgia Old Time Plow Club, and many others. A member of First Presbyterian Church, Smith lives with his wife, Dianne, on a farm in Clarke County. Smith succeeds Dan Hope who will continue to serve on the board.



Welcome Nat Kuykendall

ORLT would like to welcome Nat Kuykendall to its Board of Directors. In addition to his congenial personality, Nat brings with him 32 years of experience with the National Park Service. He began his career as a seasonal ranger at Great Smoky Mountains National Park and ended as chief of the Planning Division of the Denver Service Center. An Athens resident since 2008, Nat is also the Vice Chair of the Oconee Rivers Greenway Commission.

Oconee River Land Trust Board of Directors

■
Smith Wilson, Chair

John Willis, Vice Chair

Roger Nielsen, Secretary

Ken Jarret, Treasurer
■

Terry Camp

Chris Canalos

Walter Cook

Larry Dendy

Dan Hope

Nat Kuykendall

Hans Neuhauser

Karen Porter

Madeline Van Dyck
■

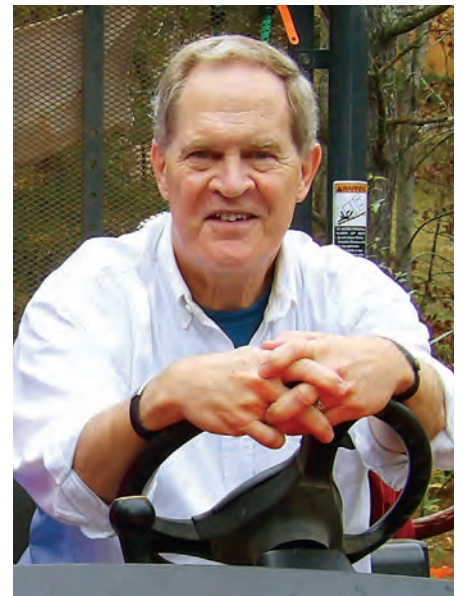
**Steffney Thompson,
Executive Director**

**Laura Hall
Land Steward**

**Carla Francis
Outreach Coordinator**

Thank You Dan Hope, Former Board Chair

Thank you Dan Hope for faithfully serving as ORLT's Board Chair from 2002-2015. Since co-founding ORLT in 1993, Dan has helped ORLT grow from an all-volunteer organization to a sustainable, accredited, and staffed non-profit. He credits an incredible board, Sigrid Sanders, longtime Executive Director Steffney Thompson, and recent staffing additions for the positive growth. His interest in the natural world began in a high school biology class which led him to become the Superintendent of Parks for the City of Athens, a founding member of Sandy Creek Nature Center, a board member of the Oconee River Greenway Commission, and a founding member of ORLT. We appreciate Dan's contributions to the Oconee River Land Trust and to the Athens-Clarke community as a whole. Dan will continue to serve on the board of directors.





CONSERVATION E

4,430 acres



EASEMENTS 2015
s conserved



Manassas Bog

Pierre Howard

The Manassas bog complex is unique for its unusual assemblage of rare plant species. ORLT is working with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources to conserve a 50-acre portion of the bogs in southeastern Georgia. Property highlights include:

- Gopher Tortoises – Georgia’s state reptile and a keystone species
- 3 Pitcher Plant Species – All state protected
- 5 Orchid Species
- Longleaf Pine Sandhill Ecosystem – A rapidly declining ecosystem
- Project Partner – Georgia Department of Natural Resources



Pierre Howard

Upcoming Events



Friday, March 18

Terrapin Percentage Night Benefiting the Oconee River Land Trust

- 4:30–7:30 p.m.
- Live music and Holy Crepes food truck
- Family-friendly event: All ages welcome, 21+ to drink
- Pitcher Plant Sale: Take a carnivorous plant home with you!
- Catch up with members and staff over pints of craft beer

For more information about the event see www.terrapiinbeer.com



Kevin Turner



Saturday, April 9

Hike at the Lotsanotty Easement in Jackson County at 9:00 a.m.

Mingle over coffee and donuts before enjoying a moderate 1.5 mile hike along the Middle Oconee River. Walt Cook and Carla Francis will lead the hike as we look for interesting birds, trees, wildflowers, and other natural features. Bring sturdy shoes and water as there are no facilities at this property.

- FREE for members / \$5 non-members

RSVP By April 6 to carla@oconeeriverlandtrust.org for directions and more information.

Saturday, April 16

Annual Member Meeting: Breakfast and a Hike

9:30 a.m. Bagels, Donuts, and Coffee are served

10:00 a.m. Hike Begins

Meet us at the beautiful Winthrop easement in Oglethorpe County and discover what projects we're working on, recent accomplishments, and ways to get involved. After breakfast, Land Steward Laura Hall will lead us on a 2 hour hike while we help her complete the annual monitoring visit of the property. The Winthrop easement is home to beaver-filled wetlands, creeks, forests, and blooming meadows. Please bring sturdy walking shoes and water.

- FREE for members / \$5 non-members

RSVP By April 13 to carla@oconeeriverlandtrust.org for directions and more information.



Thank You to 2015-2016 ORLT Supporters

The Turner Foundation, Inc

\$10,000 towards rare bog habitat protection in southeast Georgia

Riverview Foundation

\$214,400 to purchase and protect property adjacent to ACC greenspace on the Middle Oconee River

New and Renewed ORLT Members

Thank you for supporting us during our recent membership drive and over the years.



THE OCONEE RIVER LAND TRUST
675 Pulaski Street, Suite 2300
Athens, GA 30601



"The mission of the Oconee River Land Trust is to conserve natural lands, to protect water quality, preserve wildlife habitat, and enhance the quality of our lives and those of future generations."

**Yes, I want to help protect green space in our region!
Please enroll me as a member of the Oconee River Land Trust.**

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Membership Levels:

☐ Student (\$10)

☐ Land Protector (\$100)

☐ Land Saver (\$30)

☐ Land Conservator (\$500)

☐ Land Steward (\$50)

☐ Trustee of the Land (\$1,000+)

Thank you for your support!

Mail this form (or join on-line at oconeeriverlandtrust.org) with your tax-deductible contribution to:

The Oconee River Land Trust ■ 675 Pulaski Street, Suite 2300 ■ Athens, GA 30601

**Planning for
the future?**

If you are interested in

Legacy Giving contact

Steffney Thompson at

706-552-3138 or **steffney@**

oconeeriverlandtrust.org.

Our tax identification

number is 58-2108824.