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PINE BARRENS  
SOCIETY**  
Protecting Land & Water

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A copy of the last annual report filed with the New York State Department of Law may be obtained by writing to NYS Attorney General's Charities Bureau, Attn: FOIL Officer, 120 Broadway, New York, NY, 10271 or may be obtained directly from the Long Island Pine Barrens Society, 2042 North Country Rd, Ste 103 Wading River, NY 11792



**AN AERIAL VIEW OF THE PINE BARRENS: A Treasure at 10,000 Feet.**

**Pine Barrens TV**

The Pine Barrens Society's television program airs on Cablevision/Altice Public Access. October 1, 2022 to September 30, 2023.

The program can also be viewed on the Society's YouTube page at [www.youtube.com/lipinebarrenssociety](http://www.youtube.com/lipinebarrenssociety).

**Towns of Babylon, Brookhaven, Huntington, Islip, Riverhead, Smithtown, Southampton & Southold Channel 20:**

Saturdays at 10:30 AM  
Wednesdays at 7:00 PM  
Thursdays at 12:30 PM

**Town of East Hampton:**

Wednesdays at 6:30 PM  
Thursdays at 9:00 PM  
Fridays at 3:30 PM



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# Today

## THE BEST OF THE REST

Society Seeks to Procure the Last of our Treasured Pine Barrens

Credits: Top, John Turner; Center, Suzanne Ruggles



**THE BEST OF THE REST PARCEL:** A spectacular treasure at the Shoreham-Wading River Coastal Forest.

To their credit, New York State, Suffolk County, and the Towns of Brookhaven, Riverhead, and Southampton have, over the past half-century, acquired thousands of acres of open space in the Long Island Pine Barrens. Some of these acquisitions such as Suffolk County's Cranberry Bog Nature Preserve and New York State's large Rocky Point Natural Resource Management Area preceded the passage of the 1993 Pine Barrens Protection Act. With the passage of this seminal law, government stepped up its acquisition efforts.

Today, Long Islanders are the beneficiaries of this sustained and targeted effort. More than 50,000 largely contiguous acres of the Central Pine Barrens have been acquired, creating Long Island's "Central Park." This "park" represents the full breadth of the ecosystem's diversity: river and stream systems, former cranberry bogs, Atlantic White Cedar and Red Maple swamps, vernal pools, coastal plain ponds, pine dominated forests, oak woodlands, scrub oak savannas, and grasslands.

Yet, the Pine Barrens has not reached its full ecological, hydrological, or recreational potential. There are still thousands of acres of undeveloped properties in and adjacent to both the Core Preservation and Compatible Growth Areas whose protection would safeguard our drinking water resources, benefit species and natural communities contained therein, and enhance the public's enjoyment of this natural resource.

The primary properties that comprise "The Best of the Rest" campaign are listed below. Many are included in the 2016 New

York State Open Space Plan. Some are also included in the Master Open Space List approved by Suffolk County:

(1) The Shoreham Forest property assemblage consists of hundreds of acres of forests and tidal marshland. A variety of

forest types occur here, ranging from upland Pine Barrens woodlands to richer beech-hickory-hornbeam forests. The area contains nearly a mile of intact shoreline along Long Island Sound. A vernal pool and surrounding forest provide productive habitat to a variety of amphibian species.

(2) A set of five parcels along and adjacent to the Peconic River contain upland forest and wetland vegetation along the river. These properties are sandwiched between parcels owned by the NYSDEC, which contain endangered species habitat.

(3) A set of nine parcels Hogan and CCP LLC properties in Hampton Bays, adjacent to Sears-Bellows County Park, include upland Pine Barrens forests of pitch pine and oak-pine forests situated on the Ronkonkoma Moraine.

(4) Important undeveloped parcels are adjacent to the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Rocky Point Natural Resource Management Area.

Nearby, there are properties that belong to the Longwood School District and an undeveloped portion of the former K-Mart, north of Artist Lake.

(5) Several are adjacent to the Pine Trail Preserve in Manorville. Acquisitions will help maintain the scenic quality of this recreational asset.



**EARTH STAR FUNGUS:** A wonderfully named species grows in open sandy areas throughout the Pine Barrens.

### Hiking the Pine Barrens in Winter

By Tom Casey

*Mr. Casey is a Long Island Pine Barrens Society Board Member.*

One of the perks of living on Long Island is that we get to enjoy the quarterly change of seasons. For those of us who explore the Pine Barrens, that means we can have four different experiences in each place we walk, depending on the time of year. Reddening branches on the understory berry bushes hint at spring and are soon followed by a chorus of returning avian life above and of peepers and bullfrogs in vernal pools below. Then comes an array of evanescent flowers — frostweed, sheep laurel, trailing arbutus, sweet pepperbush, and so on.

In summer the Pine Barrens heat up, often ten or fifteen degrees hotter than the shore. Frankly, we rank this season number four. We tend to shorten our walks and be done before noon. Even so, we enjoy observing the subtle changes in the landscape, as the oak leaves tire in the dog days of August, and the ospreys head south by Labor Day.

Autumn, of course, is a delight. Tupelos along streams and ponds glow a brilliant red for a few days in early September. Then the red maples, oaks and berry bushes take their turn, punctuated by the orange and yellow of sassafras. Even after a droughty summer such as this one past, the forest always puts on a show. The days after the first frost are our favorites.

Credit: Sandy Richard



THE PINE BARRENS IN WINTER: Frozen pine needles.

And finally, there's winter. Sorry, snowbirds, but you're missing a great time to lace up your boots. The nip in the air, the rosy cheeks, the frosty plumes of breath, and all the other clichés about jingle-bell weather really hold true. It's one of the best times to hike on Long Island, invigorating and relatively tick-free. (Don't get cocky, though. Take the usual precautions.) The last several autumns have seemed delightfully long and pleasant, and the harsh payback we've braced ourselves for in the Januarys and Februarys hasn't really materialized, so the window for great winter walks is longer.

After leaf fall the landscape appears more monochromatic, stark and yet serene, and views expand, allowing us to peer more deeply into the woods, to notice things we missed earlier. We once took a January walk in the Pine Trail Preserve, where there's a spot on the trail flanked by very large, ancient anthills, many of which are obscured in the other seasons. This time, we visited after an overnight, light dusting of snow. Most of the snow had already melted in the warm leaf litter on the forest floor—but the tops of those anthills retained their white caps, presenting us with a range of miniature Mount Fujis.

The Pine Trail, by the way, offers a fine winter walk from NY 25 to views of Sandy and Grassy Ponds, a round trip of about four miles. The Paumanok Path section in Flanders, from the south end of Pleasure Drive to NY 24, features Maple Swamp, Birch Creek and Owl Pond plus a few viewpoints from the rolling terrain. That's four miles one way, so you may choose to hike with a friend and leave a car at one end of the hike.

For a short but delightful introduction to the Pine Barrens, try Cranberry Bog County Park on Lake Avenue in Riverhead, a one-mile loop around the historic bog, passing some majestic Atlantic white cedars. At Quogue Wildlife Refuge about four miles of well-maintained paths range from wetlands through tall upland pines to dwarf pines, with views of two ponds and Quantuck Creek.

Farther west on the Island but outside the Core Preservation Area, you can enjoy Pine Barrens on easy trails in Connetquot State Park Preserve in Great River and Sans Souci County Park on Broadway Avenue in Sayville.

The walks we've mentioned are all on Suffolk County property. Many more possibilities are to be found on lands managed by the NYS Department of Conservation. DEC, however, closes trails during the January shotgun deer hunting season. There will be plenty of time for winter hikes on their land later. (The County allows hiking on its marked trails, as hunting areas are separate.)

Remember, too, that walking isn't the only way to enjoy the Pine Barrens. If we ever do get a significant snowfall, many of the trails are well-suited for cross-country skiing or snowshoeing. Finally, wherever and however you go, bring water. It may be cold out, but you'll respire just as much in winter as in summer. Stay hydrated.

Don't succumb to cabin fever. The Pine Barrens Preserve not only protects our drinking water but gives us the gift of tens of thousands of acres of passive recreational opportunities. You'll find healthy winter adventures that sharpen the senses in peaceful surroundings. And all while the days get longer!

### ROBIN AMPER ENVIRONMENTAL SCHOLARSHIP

For the third year, the Long Island Pine Barrens Society has offered its Robin Amper Environmental Scholarship. The scholarship, available to any incoming college freshman living on Long Island and studying an environmental topic, is dedicated to the work and memory of Robin Amper, the late wife of Society Executive Director Richard Amper.

This year, the scholarship was awarded to Spencer Lane, a graduating high school senior from Port Washington who is studying environmental science at Franklin & Marshall College in Pennsylvania. His passion for preserving the environment was evidenced in his application essay, extracurricular activities and his letters of recommendation. We look forward to hearing about Spencer's academic progress, and to what the future holds for him!

### SOCIETY CELEBRATES 45 YEARS OF ENVIRONMENTAL DEFENSE

This past October, the Long Island Pine Barrens Society celebrated its 45th anniversary with its annual Environmental Gala. The Gala, held online for the third time since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, was streamed on both Facebook Live and YouTube.

This year's gala served not just to celebrate 45 years, but also to commemorate the launching of the Society's new initiative, The Best of The Rest. The initiative, focused on preserving 3,800 acres of land not yet federally protected, was originally launched in August, and was the focus of the Gala 45. Four of the Society's board members: Tom Casey, Jennifer Garvey, John Turner, and Suzanne Ruggles held a roundtable talk on the unique characteristics and importance of the different parcels, with each member providing their perspective.

As always, the success of our Gala lay almost entirely with our generous donors, who'd backed and supported us through our 45-year battle to save the Pine Barrens. Thank you, as always.

### MIDDLE SCHOOL KIDS GO TO COLLEGE!

The LIPBS's "Middle School Kids Go To College" program has completed yet another year, beginning with a lecture by Dr. Christopher Gobler from Stony Brook University, which provides background information for student research. Next, students prepare posters and PowerPoint presentations. The program culminates with an awards celebration. This time, 21 winners were selected from over 60 students, their projects showcasing the very best of what the next generation has to offer. During the awards ceremony, held on July 19, students were honored by Society staff, as well as a number of locally elected officials and the executive director of the Central Pine Barrens Commission. The student projects were highlighted, and each winner received a personalized wooden plaque from the National Grid Foundation, personally delivered to their homes by Society staff.

Every year, the Society is blown away by the hard work of these students and the depths to which they understand their chosen topics. Seeing the future of environmental preservation in action is consistently one of the most important parts of the program, and this year was no different. The use of kelp to improve ocean water quality, causes of ocean pollution, and the function of storm drains were among the topics presented during this year's awards ceremony, and the society looks forward to what next year's students will bring to the table.

Credit: Andrew Wong



NESAQUAKE MIDDLE SCHOOL WINNERS: Madelyn Geldmacher and Sophia Leodis

# Society Seeks to Procure the Last of our Treasured Pine Barrens

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Specifically, the additional acquisitions proposed in the “Best of the Rest” campaign will:

- Help to safeguard groundwater and surface water quality throughout the Pine Barrens, including the Carmans and Peconic Rivers;
- Enhance the viability of area-dependent wildlife species such as whippoor-wills by reducing the effects of habitat fragmentation;
- Enhance opportunities for management activities such as invasive species control and prescribed burns, while providing hikers access to new trails

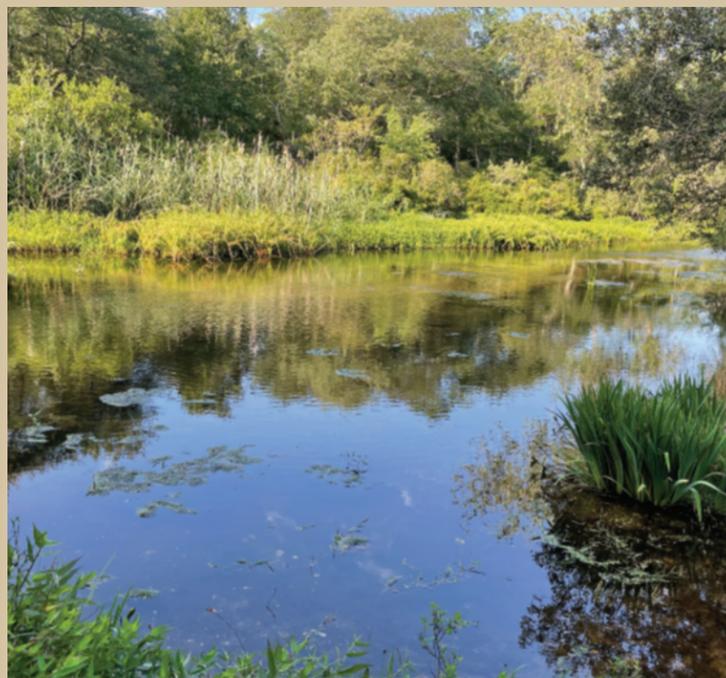
(6) Many hundreds of acres of undisturbed, ecologically significant grasslands, wetlands, and woodlands are located at the Town of Riverhead-owned EPCAL property. The diversity of natural communities occurring on site provide habitat to hundreds of plant and animal species.

(7) Hundreds of acres of Rose-Breslin property are situated between the Brookhaven Airport and the Long Island Expressway. The numerous natural communities here provide habitat for a large number of plant and animal species.

(8) Several key properties along the Carmans River include the Szuster Farm, the Johnston parcel, and those embedded within and adjacent to the “Camp Olympia Open Space” complex.

(9) Ehler Real Estate Holdings are extensively wooded pine barrens properties adjacent to the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Middle Island Conservation Area and contain upland habitat for endangered species. These parcels are situated northwest of the SR 25 and William Floyd Parkway.

(10) Several key parcels are in the “Spinney Hills”, involving forested pine barrens properties adjacent to extensive Town of



Credit: John Turner

**PRESERVING:** The Town of Brookhaven Preserve in Yaphank shows a number of wetland plants, including a large bed of Water Willow growing on the far side of the river.

Southampton-owned land (including “The Hills” complex).

(11) SC Lizem LLC properties are densely wooded with a large old field existing in the eastern parcel. These properties are adjacent to NYSDEC property in Calverton.

(12) Federally-owned grassland and forest properties along the eastern edge of Calverton Cemetery property and north of EPCAL are worthy of acquisition.

(13) Stand-alone parcels and some in an old file subdivision in a forest complex are at the extension of County Route 111. They are forested Pine Barrens properties that form a portion of the watershed of Seatuck Creek.

(14) The Swan Pond Golf Course in Manorville is a critically positioned parcel, within the Peconic River watershed.

(15) Numerous properties situated within “Old File Residential Subdivision

Maps” are scattered through the Pine Barrens at Warbler Woods (Brookhaven), Ashton Road (Brookhaven), Manorville Hills (Brookhaven), Twin Ponds (Brookhaven), Calverton Ponds (Riverhead) the southwest and northwest quadrants (Southampton) of the Dwarf Pine Plains; and at Spinney Hills (Southampton).

## LEWIS ROAD PRD CONTINUES TO THREATEN LONG ISLAND WATER PROTECTION

On December 7, 2022, the Central Pine Barrens Commission approved the proposed Lewis Road (formerly “The Hills”) development in East Quogue by a vote of 3-1, with one abstention. The following day, The Southampton Town Planning Board approved the project in a split decision. These approvals took place over the objections of the Pine Barrens Society, Group for the East End, local citizens, Assemblymen Fred Thiele and Steve Englebright and Brookhaven Town Supervisor Edward Romaine.

The Pine Barrens Society has opposed this project since the developer's original application for a Multi-use Planned Development District (MUPDD) zone change in 2015. Our opposition has been based on its location (core and compatible growth areas), its size (a 600-acre site) and its related potential for significant environmental impacts.

The project was later approved by the Town of Southampton Planning Board. The Central Pine Barrens Commission approved the project in January 2021 as a PDD. While awaiting other approvals and permits, the project was redesigned and resubmitted to the Town Planning Board and to the Commission, ostensibly addressing issues that the Commission staff had noted in 2021. In our view, this redesign is a new project – a commercial project –with extensive catering hall-like dining, a huge clubhouse and expansive recreational facilities such as a bowling alley and a 10,000 square foot pro shop, amenities not typical of luxury residential developments. This new plan should have been viewed as a new application, requiring the SEQRA process to

begin anew. Unfortunately, the Commission chose not to view it as such.

Prior to the Commission's vote, support for this position was voiced by Supervisor Romaine. “Although this project started out as one thing, it has since morphed into something else. The development relies on a review that was undertaken by the Town Board, which has no jurisdiction under the current review by the Planning Board.” Also, Assemblyman Thiele's submitted correspondence commented on the lack of a viable SEQRA process. “The SEQRA process for this project is the proverbial bent wagon wheel. Once it is bent, it will never be round again. The current process is not salvageable. Notably, the lead agency is an agency that doesn't even have approval over this action. Further the review was performed for a change of zone application that no longer exists and is not even close to what the applicant is now proposing.”

We, along with Group for the East End, are continuing to litigate. A successful challenge will depend upon our enlisting new community members to serve as named plaintiffs.

If this project materializes, it will likely be detrimental to the Pine Barrens and to our water quality. Without attention to water quality, the protection of the sole source aquifer and surface waters are in jeopardy – the very resource the Pine Barrens Act is supposed to protect! Looking forward, Assemblyman Englebright, stated, “I intend to produce more than a dozen critical new environmental objectives. We cannot afford to lose environmentally-sensitive resources.”