



*Growing Community  
Connections to the Land*







# Protecting the Baltimore Checkerspot Butterfly in Waccabuc

BY RHYS HEALY, WLT HIGH SCHOOL INTERN | Rhys has worked with WLT for two years as part of the Byram Hills High School Senior Explorations Internship Program.



When I was younger I would join my grandma in a weekend observation of the birds, butterflies, and critters that traversed through her prized garden and bird feeder. When I asked her why she watched them almost every day, she explained to me how she loved butterflies and other pollinators because they made her flowers grow. Fascinated and curious how a small fluttery creature could make flowers sprout, I decided that they were magical.

Now as a senior at Byram Hills High School in Armonk, I sadly learned that butterflies are in fact not magical, but still hold an incredible importance to the ecosystems around us as “magical” pollinators. From the fruits and vegetables that we eat everyday, to thousands of crops and plant products used around the world, pollinators are nature’s key link to sustaining healthy ecosystems and plants.

While interning for Westchester Land Trust (WLT) for the past two years, I learned about one species of butterfly, the Baltimore checkerspot, that was on the brink of disappearing from Westchester altogether. The Baltimore checkerspot is a regionally rare species that has only been sighted in a handful of preserves in Westchester County.

**I sought to learn more about why this stunning butterfly with unique orange and black colors was declining and what I could do to help.**

Through talking with John Zeiger, the preserve manager at WLT, and Karalyn Lamb, WLT’s Pollinator Pop-Up consultant, and doing some of my own research, I learned that the Baltimore checkerspot’s caterpillars favored the white turtlehead plant, and that deer thoroughly enjoy munching on this plant as well.

Curious to see if deer browse was affecting the abundance of this wildflower and in turn the population of Baltimore checkerspots in the area, I conducted a small-scale study at Pine Croft Meadow Preserve in Waccabuc, one of WLT’s preserves where these butterflies can be seen. At Pine Croft, I mapped the white turtlehead in the area, then fenced some populations with deer-proof fencing while leaving others open for the gluttonous deer to feast on. After collecting data, my plan is to come back next year to see the difference between the fenced and unfenced plots.

My goal for this project is to make a difference, even if it’s at the local level, in working to preserve the environment for my future and for generations to come.

After graduating from high school, I will be studying environmental science at Cornell University, where I can learn more about the complex nature of the environment and what we can do to help. I often feel like my future is out of control, or that there’s little hope for my kids or even me to enjoy the incredible nature earth has to offer.

**But through working with enthusiastic and passionate volunteers and staff at organizations such as the Westchester Land Trust, I’m reminded that there are more people like me out there who are working to secure a future with nature for all of us.**

These are people who see the magic in the butterflies, so hopefully one day I can watch the butterflies with my grandkids and they can see their magic like I did.



# Meet WLT’s Summer Interns

Summer interns Briana Marcano (L) and Erick Rosa (R) are working with WLT’s professional staff and volunteers to improve the trail access and ecological well-being of our nature preserves.

WLT is pleased to welcome two summer interns, Briana Marcano and Erick Rosa, as part of a newly launched internship program. This initiative is designed to provide conservation career development opportunities for students to gain practical conservation skills.

Briana and Erick are alumni of Groundwork Hudson Valley’s Green Team, a program that hires Yonkers High School students for field-based conservation work.

The interns are spending the summer working throughout Westchester County on various trail improvement projects, such as bridge

installation and ecological restoration projects like invasive plant control and native wildflower plantings.

This internship program is partially funded through grants from the Long Island Sound Stewardship Fund at the Long Island Community Foundation; the Lower Hudson Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management using funds from the Environmental Protection Fund, and Rusticus Garden Club.

**Your support makes opportunities for youth conservationists possible. Thank you! Contact Kara Whelan at [kara@westchesterlandtrust.org](mailto:kara@westchesterlandtrust.org) to learn how you can support WLT’s internship programs.**



## Fresh from WLT’s Sugar Hill Farm

**Get Growing** ..... Our Sugar Hill Farm garden has produced more than **250 pounds** of vegetables so far this season, thanks to our dedicated volunteers, staff, and farmer.

**Giving Back** ..... All food is donated to local families in partnership with the Community Center of Northern Westchester.

**Lend a Hand** ..... Want to get your hands dirty? Visit [bit.ly/HelpWLT](http://bit.ly/HelpWLT) to sign up for a volunteer shift on the farm.

# Conserving Land for Our Future



WLT has been busy protecting land that our community depends on. We’ve already conserved **152 acres of land** across four projects in Bedford and Cortlandt and we’re diligently working to conserve more land throughout Westchester and Putnam counties. **Stay tuned for a full update on recent land acquisitions in our fall newsletter.**



## Pollinator Pop-Up en Español

Did you know that WLT’s Pollinator Pop-Up materials are all available in Spanish? Visit [bit.ly/WLTbees](http://bit.ly/WLTbees) for family-friendly activities, fun facts, and plant lists that show how we can all help pollinators.

Thank you to Con Edison for partially funding this WLT program and supporting local efforts to make our communities more pollinator friendly.





# Get Your Tickets for Bluegrass in the Barn

*Join us for a fall soiree Friday, September 17 at Maple Grove Farm in Bedford*

**Bluegrass in the Barn** will feature creative cocktails, gourmet hors d'oeuvres, and live music from Brooklyn Bluegrass Collective. As we enjoy the evening in a beautiful rustic barn, we'll raise a toast to Michael and Jamie Wolff, our 2021 Preservation ANGEL Honorees, and celebrate the land we love.

**Funds raised from Bluegrass in the Barn will support our farmland preservation and food justice programs.** Since 2012, WLT has partnered with local food banks to grow and distribute an average of 8,000 servings of fresh produce annually to local families in need in Westchester. WLT also works with local farmers and landowners to facilitate farmland match opportunities and we're exploring ways to put land into production for urban and non-traditional farms.

**You can help us make a difference in our community!** Visit [bit.ly/BluegrassInTheBarn](https://bit.ly/BluegrassInTheBarn) to purchase your ticket and support our food justice efforts. If you're unable to attend but would like to contribute to our work to strengthen local food systems, please consider making a donation to WLT.

Contact Michelle Culbert at [michelle@westchesterlandtrust.org](mailto:michelle@westchesterlandtrust.org) to learn more about this event.



## *Bluegrass in the Barn*



MAPLE GROVE FARM  
20 Black Brook Road  
Bedford

**FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 17  
5-8PM**

**Cocktails & Hors D'oeuvres**

**Live Music by  
Brooklyn Bluegrass Collective**

Honoring  
Michael & Jamie Wolff  
2021 Preservation ANGEL Honorees



*Raising Funds for  
Farmland Preservation  
& Food Justice Programs*

