



Hunterdon Land Trust

Protecting the places you love

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Hunterdon Land Trust Maintains Local Meadow for Grassland Birds

Flemington, NJ - The Hunterdon Land Trust owns nine properties throughout the county and plans management activities on each one to maintain public access, protect water quality, and provide valuable wildlife habitat. One of the greatest stewardship challenges conservation organizations face is that posed by invasive species. Invasive species are those that are not naturally found in the local ecosystem, have few if any natural predators or controls, and cause environmental or economic harm. The Hunterdon Land Trust recently partnered with Carl Klingler of Klingler Excavation to remove invasive plants to restore a grassland meadow on the Zega Locketong Preserve in Delaware Township.

Just beyond the trailhead near the 1878 iron truss bridge on Raven Rock-Rosemont Road, visitors walk through a 6.5-acre meadow maintained for kestrels, bluebirds, and other grassland birds. The Hunterdon Land Trust must actively manage the property in order to conserve the values of the meadow habitat. In recent years, invasive species, primarily multi-flora rose and autumn olive, have populated the field reducing native plant species and interrupting the grassland.

Multi-flora rose, native to Japan, is extremely prolific as it has been estimated that one plant can produce one million seeds each year which remain viable for decades. The rose is tolerant of many conditions and can spread quickly to form dense thickets that prevent native species from growing. This changes the landscape and reduces food sources for local wildlife. Similarly autumn olive, native to Asia, inhibits native plant growth through excessive shading as the shrubs can grow to 20 feet high. It grows quickly and germinates easily; therefore mowing the shrubs alone will not prevent regrowth, and the roots must be removed.

To remove these invasive plants from the grassland, the Land Trust staff received assistance from Mr. Klinger who spent a full day in the meadow with a multi-terrain skid steer loader with a brush hog. After mowing the invasive plants, he used a 5-ton excavator with a hydraulic thumb to remove the roots of the autumn olive from the field to reduce the likelihood that it will grow back.

Removing persistent invasive species like the multi-flora rose and autumn olive is a daunting task but one made easier with the right equipment. The Hunterdon Land Trust thanks Klingler Excavation (<http://klinglerexcavation.com>) for its generous donation of both equipment and labor to help the organization continue to be responsible stewards of protected lands.

The 70-acre Zega Lockatong Preserve in Delaware Township is part of a 250-acre greenbelt of natural lands accessible by miles of trails through woods, meadows, and stream corridors. The Hunterdon Land Trust and its partners preserved the property from development to protect vital wildlife habitat and the Lockatong Creek, which flows into the Delaware River.

Visit the Zega Lockatong Preserve: From Frenchtown, take Route 29 south and turn left at Federal Twist Road. Turn right onto Rosemont Raven Rock Road. The preserve parking area is on the left before the bridge.

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Suggested photo 1 caption: Klingler Excavation removes invasive species to restore a grassland meadow at Zega Lockatong Preserve.