



Highstead Arboretum

Spring/Summer 2005

From the Director

My father was a natural storyteller who did not let his occasional lack of factual information prevent him from explaining everything from gravity to the germination of a seed. His poetic tales were a delightful mix of his detailed observations and wild imagination. When I later studied these topics in science classes, I was still fascinated by the stories – and didn't mind the discrepancies with the earlier versions I had learned. My mother immersed me in her love of gardening. In the midst of suburbia, with a small back yard, she created a haven of peace and beauty. She was even brave and generous enough to allow her children to experiment and create within her garden.

These early experiences – and many others – that developed my connection with nature are important to where I am and who I have become. Just as important as these experiences, is the optimistic spirit of my parents that pervaded our lives. All of us who care about the environment realize how easy it is to become discouraged as we see the many problems that face our natural world. Working to protect native species and communities can seem impossible in the midst of habitat destruction, global warming, and invasive species. I believe that nurturing optimism must be as much of a priority as increasing our connection with, and knowledge about, the natural world. It is vital that we are constantly reminded of our power to make positive change.

My vision for Highstead is for it to be a place that will provide people with knowledge and understanding of our environment. But just as importantly, I want Highstead to be a place that inspires action and renews hope. At Highstead, we can inspire people both through providing a place of beauty, and through demonstrating actions we can take to protect and restore our native landscapes.

I am thrilled to be here at Highstead, and honored to have the responsibility to continue to build this arboretum.

*Margaret Shea
Executive Director*

Biophilia and Land Management

Kathleen Kitka, *Horticulturist*

A growing number of anthropologists and psychologists believe that modern society's separation from nature is the root cause of our environmental problems. In an effort to better understand our split from harmony with nature and impel us toward responsible environmental action, studies were conducted on various groups of individuals who were dedicated environmental activists. These studies "concluded that the most committed environmental attitudes seem to arise from deep psychoemotional bonding experiences with nature. Almost all could be traced to one or both of the following experiences: early positive encounters with nature, usually in the presence of loved adults, and later transcendental moments in natural places that may have had healing value."

In his biophilia hypothesis, evolutionary biologist Edward O. Wilson asserts that humans have a deep genetically-based emotional need to experience and affiliate with the living world. "Wilson calls this need a part of our 'ultimate human nature,' a hereditary trait formed when our survival and well-being depended upon how effectively we learned from and coped with the only environment we had: nature." This connection to the natural world still remains essential to the full development of a wide range of human characteristics and potential. "Living almost exclusively in a world set apart from nature, humans now

face an "extinction of experience" – the loss of direct, personal contact with nature." Also, "the natural environment is disappearing," he says, "what will happen to the human psyche when such a defining part of human evolutionary experience is diminished or erased?"²

A hopeful and optimistic response to our ecological crisis is the practice of environmental restoration. Though not entirely new, environmental restoration has been attracting serious consideration in recent years among environmentalists engaged in the conservation of natural areas. Restoration work seeks to restore the underlying health of an ecosystem by enabling its natural processes to return. It is an incremental and developmental process that can continue beyond one's lifetime. The greatest value of restoration is not just its ability to transform the landscape directly, but its ability to transform it indirectly through the education and transformation of the human beings who inhabit and shape it.³

When doing restoration work, people become involved with a place in a very active and embodied manner. As a result, they often "fall in love" with it with an intensity I have seen matched only on extended wilderness journeys. By thinking through and taking the steps that help remove

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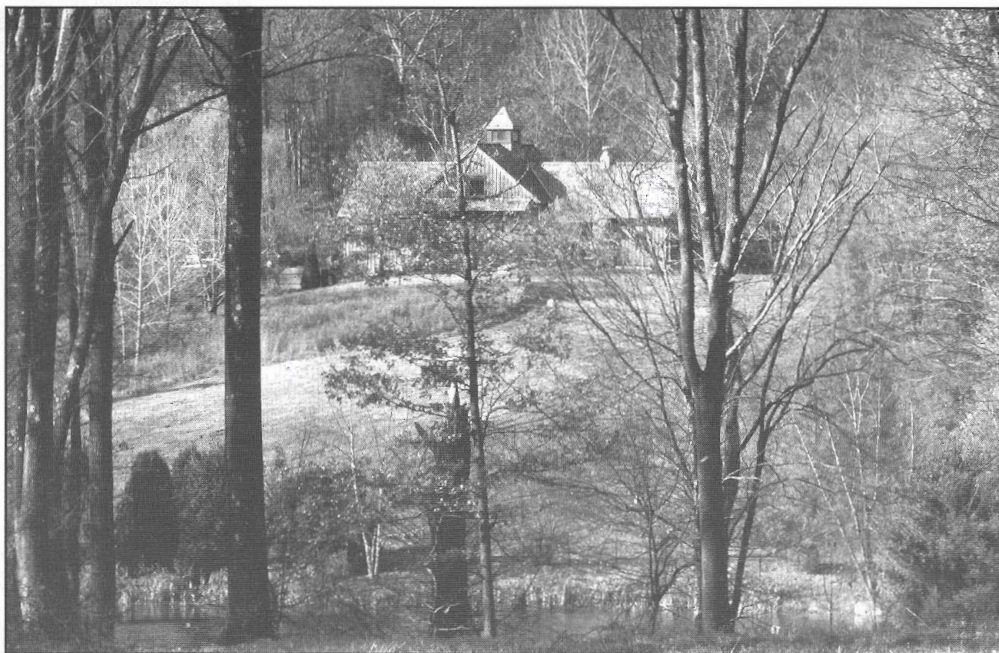


Photo by Birgit Freybe Bateman

Highstead Programs

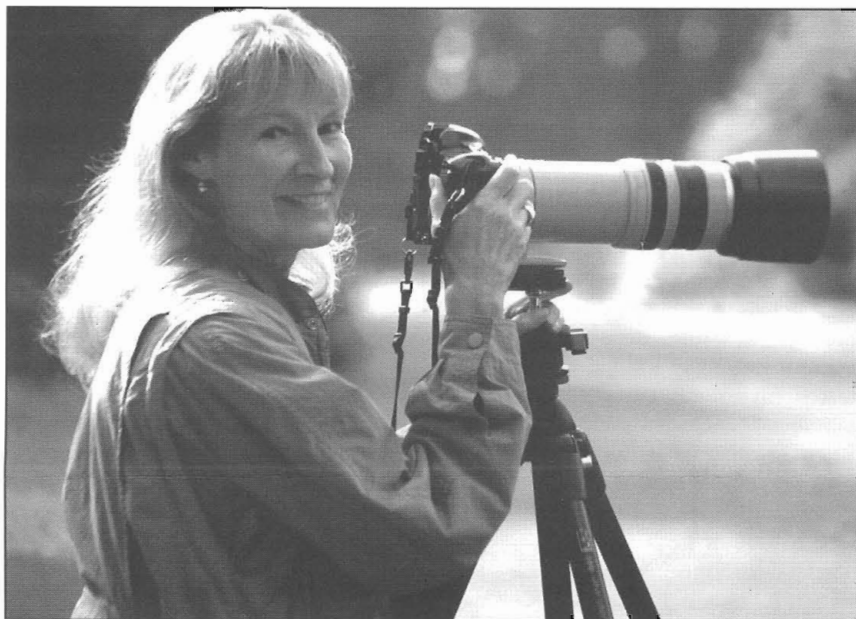


Photo by Robert Bateman

April 16 – May 16, 2005

Art Exhibit Highstead Portfolio

Photographs by Birgit Freybe Bateman

"It was a delight to visit Highstead during the various seasons, to capture images of expansive landscapes and enchanting details. Although photographs can provide a real visual rendering, I decided I would like this exhibit to have an artistic bent. In the words of Irving Penn, "A good photograph should startle the eye of the beholder." I hope viewers can see this marvelous place in fresh ways." Birgit Freybe Bateman

Viewing is by appointment

Saturday, April 16 2 pm–5 pm

Art Reception

Highstead Portfolio

Birgit Freybe Bateman

Birgit will speak briefly about her work at 2:30.

Sunday, May 22

Garden Conservancy Open Day at Highstead

Tours of Highstead's Azalea Collection

10 am–12 pm Margaret Shea, Highstead Executive Director
This tour will focus on the features of the natural communities where Azalea is found and the role of Azaleas in this community.

12 pm–2 pm Kathleen Kitka, Highstead Horticulturist
Learn how existing site conditions and overall objectives influence the design and maintenance of the Azalea collection and its naturalistic surroundings.

2 pm–4 pm George Elkins, Guest Tour Guide
Azaleas and ericaceous companion plantings increase the aesthetic value and diversity of a semi-shaded, naturalistic home landscape. Highlighted on this tour will be those plants readily available in the nursery trade.

Botanical Art Reception 2 pm–5 pm

Invasive Plants and Native Alternatives

Greater New York Guild of Natural Science Illustrators

Many of the artists will be present at the reception to discuss their work.

Botanical Demonstration

11:30 am–2:30 pm

Dolores Santoliquido will demonstrate botanical illustration techniques using acrylics and colored pencil.

Plant Sale

10 am–5 pm

Broken Arrow Nursery will be on site selling some hard-to-find Azalea species, as well as native plants that make good companion plants for this shrub. (cash or check only, please)

May 22 – June 31

Botanical Art Exhibit

**Invasive Plants and
Native Alternatives**

**Greater New York Guild of
Natural Science Illustrators**

Viewing is by appointment



Phragmites australis by Eleanor Mandelich



Photo by Birgit Freybe Bateman

Spring and Summer 2005

Saturday, June 4

Members' Day

This year's Member's Day program will focus on invasive exotic plants in our landscape.

Highstead Plant Invaders: Can Past Land Use Explain Current Distribution?

10:30 am-11:30 am

**Dr. Betsy Von Holle,
Research Fellow,
Harvard University**

Lunch

Bring a sack lunch and enjoy the beauty of the arboretum and the company of members and staff. Beverages provided.

Collaborative Solutions to Invasive Plant Management.

1 pm-2:00 pm

**Tim Abbott, Director,
The Nature Conservancy
Berkshire-Taconic
Landscape Program.**

Some tips for removing Invasive Exotic Plants in your own back yard.

2:30 pm-3:30 pm

**Margaret Shea,
Executive Director,
Highstead Arboretum**

Sunday, June 5

Garden Conservancy Open Day at Highstead

Guided Tours Through Highstead's Kalmia Collection

10 am-12 pm **Dr. Betsy Von Holle,
Research Fellow,
Harvard University**

Betsy will talk about her research on invasive species at Highstead. Her tour will demonstrate how careful observation can provide clues about the history of a site.

12 pm-2 pm **Dr. Dick Jaynes,
Broken Arrow Nursery**

Dick will discuss variation in native Kalmia and how that has been used to select horticultural varieties.

2 pm-4 pm **Victor DeMasi,
Research Affiliate,
Yale Peabody Museum**

Victor will begin with slides and specimens of native butterflies, then take us out to the meadow, which should be attracting many butterflies.

Botanical Demonstration

11:30 am-2:30 pm

Richard Rauh will demonstrate his techniques for botanical illustration using the dissecting scope.

Sunday, August 14

Garden Conservancy Open Day at Highstead

Guided Tours Through Highstead's Clethra Collection

10 am-12 pm **Kathleen Kitka,
Highstead Horticulturist**

This tour will include an overview of the wetland habitat, its ecology and management.

12 pm-2 pm **Dr. Theodora Pineau,
Professor of Biology,
Western Connecticut
State University**

Dr. Pineau will discuss some of the amphibians that live in our wetlands. If we are lucky we may hear and see a few!

2 pm-4 pm **George Elkins,
Guest Tour Guide**

This dry-footed discovery of the swamp habitat provides a closer look at the trees, shrubs and wildflowers that grow with Clethra in this wetland habitat.

To the Members and Friends of Highstead Arboretum

Cheers for Springtime! And *Cheers* for Margaret Shea, Executive Director of Highstead, who has experienced the challenge of her first New England winter with aplomb, while becoming acquainted with all the aspects of the Arboretum and planning for the new season of 2005.

Also, at this time, I should like to express many thanks to our staff members, Kathleen Kitka and Darel Peck, who managed the Arboretum so ably during the transition months, assisted by member-volunteers, Jane Bradford, Marlene and Rod Platt, and Bob and Jean MacFarlane. Their willing participation is greatly appreciated.

The entire team at Highstead looks forward to welcoming you for coming events as a new chapter of Highstead Arboretum unfolds.

Elisabeth C. Dudley, President

The care of the Earth is
our most ancient and
most worthy, and after
all, our most pleasing
responsibility. To cherish
what remains of it, and
to foster its renewal, is
our only hope.

Wendell Berry

destructive influences, stabilize the system, and support the forces of regeneration already present, they become imprinted by and identified with the place's different species and elements, and by their web of relationships.⁴

In seeing themselves as part of the larger web of life, people are inspired to think and act in ways that enrich and sustain, not diminish or destroy, the natural environment.

Any natural area that has been disrupted or degraded by human activity presents an opportunity for a restoration project. The type of program undertaken is dependent upon a number of variables and may include a combination of goals and objectives such as restoring a native plant community, increasing wildlife habitat, removing invasive species, or enhancing the beauty and diversity of an existing naturalistic landscape. Before beginning the physical act of restoring a landscape, one needs an intimate knowledge of the natural history and ecology of the site and an understanding of why it exists as it does today. This requires observing seasonal changes of the landscape, identifying plants and animals, mapping ecological communities, and noting physical, cultural and biological features. The information gathered can be used to

prepare a site inventory and is the first step in developing a management plan.

By virtue of our geological setting, institutional goals, land use history and management practices, Highstead is uniquely positioned to serve as a model and resource for assisting landowners in making the initial management choices that lead to ecologically sound land stewardship practices.

Ranging in elevation from 640 feet to a high of 758 feet – the woodland, meadow and wetland at Highstead provide opportunities for the study and appreciation of a diversity of managed and unmanaged habitats and the native plants and wildlife they support. Interspersed among these habitats are single species and collections of introduced natives and their cultivars growing in harmony with existing plant populations. They serve a range of demonstration purposes which prove useful to landowners engaged in the restoration or enhancement of their home landscapes and natural areas. Guided tours, interactive programs, environmental issue forums and botanical art exhibits are some of the educational opportunities and special events that cater to the many different ways people choose to experience and affiliate with nature.

Restoration work is a long-term, continuing process filled with ecological

uncertainties. Its success is dependent on management decisions which have the benefit of local expertise and scientific knowledge acquired through monitoring and documenting a place over an extended period of time. The staff at Highstead remains dedicated to the ongoing process of becoming intimately acquainted with the natural landscape of the arboretum as we continue to explore and share new discoveries that enable us all to become better stewards of our natural world.

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1. James A. Swan, Ph.D., *Nature As Teacher And Healer* (New York: Villard Books, 1992).
 2. cited in *The Need for Nature, Part I*, Julie Stewart-Pollack, <http://www.isde-signet.com/Magazine/Sep'96/NeedNature.html> (accessed February 7, 2005).
 3. William R. Jordan III, "Shaping The Land, Transforming The Human Spirit," in Richard Nilsen (ed.), *Helping Nature Heal* (Berkeley, CA: Whole Earth/Ten Speed Press, 1991).
 4. Elan Shapiro, "Restoring Habitats, Communities and Souls," in Theodore Roszak, Mary E. Gomes and Allen Kanner, eds., *Ecopsychology* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1995).

Highstead Arboretum™

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