



Somerset County Conservancy A Charitable Trust

www.somersetcountyconservancy.org

Newsletter

Spring 2019



Pictured from left with bluebird box: Rylynn Pyle, Emma DiFebo, and Emily Borek

Girl Scouts Community Service helps Somerset County Conservancy

For their Spring Community Service Project, Girl Scout Troop# 52906, led by Brooke Borek and Natasha Pyle, chose to rehabilitate the Bluebird Nesting Boxes along the Bluebird Trail at Kimberly Run Natural Area, owned by the Somerset County Conservancy.

At their February meeting, Girl Scout Troop# 52906 gathered to paint decorations on eleven Bluebird boxes donated by the Pennsylvania Game Commission. The bluebird boxes were mounted on poles along Bluebird Trail at KRNA. On March 16th, Girl Scouts Allison and Emily Borek, Abigail and

Emma DiFebo, and Rylynn Pyle, gathered to erect the newly decorated nesting boxes along the trail at KRNA. Afterwards, the Scouts met in the cabin at KRNA to learn more about Eastern Bluebirds in a program presented by Conservancy member Meg Moses.



Somerset Lake Action Committee

With the overcoming of a major hurdle to acquire the required commercial building permit, plans to construct a picnic pavilion at the North parking area of Somerset Lake Nature Park continues. Complex, engineered drawings of the planned 12 X 20 foot structure were required. Much to our appreciation, Danielle Kalp, P.E., from PACD, was able to complete the work. Drawings and calculations have been delivered to Somerset County to obtain the permit. Thanks Danielle! Our contractor, Joe Miller Contracting, stands ready to start construction when the soon anticipated permit is received.



Other engineering work is being done to lay out an alignment for a trail. The goal at this time is to complete a trail from the North parking lot to Wood Duck Road this year. Hopefully these improvements at the North end of the Park will be complete and further planning will be accomplished as the work on the dam, with funding and permits in place, is reported to be started later this summer.

We are still awaiting word from the PA Fish and Boat Commission on whether we can proceed with plans to design and fund a combined fish and bird friendly habitat project at the shallow North end of the lake. A Lidar study by a drone is soon to be performed to help determine the plan's feasibility. Meanwhile, large numbers of shorebirds are using the mudflats created by the partially drawn down lake. An impromptu bird walk had 27 participants to view the lake's waterfowl and shorebirds.



Education Committee Update

May is a busy time for education at Kimberly Run by the Somerset County Conservancy. Somerset Area Senior High Biology teacher, Jennifer Brougher and Conservancy Education Director, Pam Diesel, have developed several programs for students. High school, environmental science students under the direction of Mrs. Brougher and Mrs. Diesel were trained in stream analysis and plant identification at Kimberly Run.

These students then attended all sessions with grade 6 students from Somerset School District on May 13, 14, 15, 16 and 20. Each group of students had a high school mentor to assist them in capturing and identifying macroinvertebrates living in Kimberly Run. These mentors also helped to capture photos of various plant species that live on the Kimberly Run trails.

On May 22 and 24 biology students from Somerset Area Senior High School completed a full stream analysis of Kimberly Run with complete chemical testing of the water and collection and identification of macroinvertebrates and vertebrates in the Kimberly Run Stream.

The Advanced Placement Environmental Science class at Somerset completed a year-long study of the Kimberly Run system with tests taken every month during the school year. Mrs. Brougher's students made a complete analysis of the health of the stream as part of their advanced placement class.

Annual Banquet

The Annual Membership Board meeting was held in Somerset Trust Company's Rotunda Room. Twenty-seven members attended the banquet.

Elections for the 2019 Board of Directors, to hold a one-year term were made. Results were: President, Jim Moses; Vice President, Bob Hook; Secretary, Pam Diesel; and Jeff Payne DVM, Treasurer. New board member Jenn Brougher was approved along with Pam Diesel, and Jeff Payne DVM for a 3-year term.

Committee Chairperson Appointments were: Finance, Jeff Payne DVM; Education, Pam Diesel; Community Relations, Bob Hook; Land, Jim Moses; SLAC, Jeff Payne DVM.

Pam Diesel and Jenn Brougher presented a program about the Conservancy's education programs.

Fish Stocking 2019

Students from the Somerset High School Environmental Science Club helped stock Brooke Trout at Kimberly Run on April 4. The Brooke Trout were donated by the Casselman River Watershed Association; raised at their nursery operated by the Salisbury-Elk lick Hunting Club co-op fish nursery program. The Conservancy encourages voluntary catch and release fishing at KRNA in order to give more anglers an opportunity to catch trout over a longer period of time.



Earth Day

Several volunteers from the Somerset County Conservancy and the Casselman River Watershed represented their respective non-profit organizations at the third annual Earth Day Trail event, sponsored by Somerset Inc., on Saturday, April 27 in Somerset. Both groups battled strong winds as they attempted to set up their displays and information tables in Trinity Park.

Eventually Mother Nature ruled and the groups moved indoors, with help from students of SAHS 's Interact and Environmental Clubs. These students were helpful throughout the day, even returning to assist in tearing down and loading both groups' displays and educational materials.

SCC board member Jenn Brougher is the advisor for both clubs.

The Earth Day Trail, organized by Somerset Inc.'s executive director Regina Coughenour, is a fun educational event intended to generate environmental awareness among children and their families. The trail focused on the central message of Dr. Suess' *The Lorax*, “ Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing will get better. It's not.” Children had the opportunity to participate in a wide variety of hands-on conservation activities. For example, SCC board members Jeff Payne, Jim Moses, and Bob Hook, with the enthusiastic help of many little hands, used the Somerset Conservation District's watershed model to demonstrate the detrimental effects of several “pollutants” when “precipitation” carried them downstream into tributaries and eventually into a lake. The uninhibited reactions of the children made it clear that they did get the point of the demonstration. Attendees were also able to receive information about the SCC and the CRWA as well as candy, coloring books, and other materials to enhance their knowledge and appreciation of the natural world.

Casselman River Watershed Association volunteers Mari Meyers, Roger Latuch, Sue Hook, Kristi and Sylva Burkett taught the youngsters how to make natural bird feeders using pine cones, peanut butter, and bird seed. Participants and volunteers alike hope that this positive partnership of businesses, organizations, and Somerset County residents continues for years to come. We hope to see all of you there next year.



Children enjoyed learning about water pollution and how it affects our streams.

Invasive Plants

BY Rebecca Raupach

Like working to keep our waterways clean by not using chemical lawn care, doing our part to quell the spread of invasive plant species is a responsibility that most homeowners need to be aware of maintaining. Many of us take pride in keeping our lawn mowed, and at least the worst of the weeds at bay, although we need not view all weeds as baneful. When we visit our local nursery or big box store, it can be overwhelming to make a good choice when faced with the huge array of plants available. Often, I think that simply because the store sells these plants, purchasers believe that the species must be wise horticultural choices. If we would take more time to educate ourselves as to what exactly we are planting, we could save ourselves time and money later, when trying to eradicate something invasive, or aggressive. Sadly, the beautiful, wild places to which we pilgrimage, (and have unwittingly spread the invasives), bear the brunt of our ignorance.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture, National Resources Conservation Service of Pennsylvania defines invasive species as: "Invasive species are those that are non-native to an area and tend to spread to a degree that causes harm to the environment, local species, or human interests. These problem species have popped up in Pennsylvania over the years, primarily through travel and commerce that displaces them from their native ecosystem." A quick search of invasives online yields many different invasive plant species all over the U.S., many of which are sanctioned as okay to plant by towns and neighborhood associations. I'm looking at you, Callery Pear (*Pyrus calleryana*) trees.

One example of an invasive that you might have in your own landscaping is the Japanese Barberry, (*Berberis thunbergii*). Japanese barberry is a shrub that is native to Japan. In the 1870's, seeds of the Japanese barberry were introduced to North America at the Arnold Arboretum in Boston. Thanks to the bright berries and leaves that Japanese barberry produces, it has been widely planted across North America as an ornamental plant, and is the alternate host of black stem rust, (a disease capable of causing major damage/loss to grain crops). Japanese barberry is densely thorned with prolific seed production well into the fall. Birds spread the seed far and wide, and branch fragments can easily root to form new shrubs, often forming dense thickets. It is also capable of establishing itself in a variety of habitats, including areas with partial sunlight and deep shade. Environmental impact of this species is that its dense thickets reduce wildlife habitat, affect native plants and restrict recreational activities along trails. The dense growth of Japanese barberry plants shade out native species in the forest understory. Japanese barberry is capable of invading undisturbed forests and hybridizing with the common barberry (*Berberis vulgaris*, another invasive species). There's one known thicket of barberry at our own Kimberly Run, on the White Trail, on either side of the stone foot path right near the largest bridge on the trail, which is kept out of the trail by weed trimming.

Ways to keep invasive plants at bay include learning to identify invasives, and sourcing native plants whenever possible, while exercising proper control of plants. Proper disposal of invasive plants involves not composting, but adding to the trash pile instead. Keeping pets leashed on trails is another method of halting spread. Knowing what beneficial species to plant can be found at many credible sources, such as the American Horticultural Society, the U.S. National Arboretum, the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society, and your local extension office. Becoming invested in your landscape choices and knowing exactly what you've chosen to plant and why is a good way to increase pride in one's surroundings. Making careful planting choices also protects the nature we love to experience and are so fortunate to have.

SCC Interns for 2019

The Somerset County Conservancy has again entered into an Intern Agreement with the Somerset Conservation District. Under this agreement the Conservancy will lease intern services from the Conservation District on an as-needed basis. The interns this year will be Nolan Pritts, a senior at University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown. He is studying Environmental Engineering. And Grace Bell, she will be a junior at The Pennsylvania State University, Altoona, and studying Environmental Resource Management.

We are excited to have the opportunity to work with both of these students this summer.

We Need You!

Please remember that the entire operating budget of the Somerset County Conservancy, the Kimberly Run Natural Area, and the Trail on the West Side of Somerset Lake are maintained by memberships and contributions. If you have already renewed your membership for 2019, we thank you, if you have not or would like to become a new member please fill out the form on the last page of this newsletter and send it in.

We can't do it without you!!



Help Our Facebook Page Grow!

We would like to make an attempt to keep our Facebook page as active as possible and are looking for any or all photos and/or stories to share on our page! Please feel free to post on our timeline, or text your items to Martin Hurl at 814-279-2893. Let's do all we can to spread the word about the great works of the Somerset County Conservancy!



ASPARAGUS AND LEMONGRASS RISOTTO

by Isa Chandra Moskowitz and Terry Hope Romero

Serves 4 TO 6

Lemongrass broth:

- 3 cloves garlic, whole and unpeeled.
- 1 inch piece fresh ginger, sliced into ¼ inch slices.
- 1 small stick lemongrass, or 1 tablespoon dried, chopped lemongrass
- 3 cups vegetable broth
- 3 cups water
- 3 tablespoons soy sauce

Risotto:

- 1/3 cup cooking sherry
- 1 lb asparagus
- 5 tablespoons peanut oil
- 1 cup basil leaves (Thai preferred), rolled and sliced into very thin strips.
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh mint
- 6 large shallots, sliced thinly
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 Serrano red chili, sliced very thinly, or 1/2-1 teaspoon dried red pepper flakes
- 1 ½ cups Arborio rice
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- 2 tablespoon lime juice

chopped roasted peanuts and lime wedges for garnish.

If using fresh lemongrass, peel away and discard any brown stems from the stalk. Slice the stalk in half lengthwise, cut those sections into 3-4 inch lengths, and then slice them into matchstick pieces.

Lightly bruise the ginger slices by gently pounding them with the side of your knife. Crush the garlic cloves with the side of your knife as well, but keep whole; just lay the flat part of the blade over the clove of garlic and give it a good whack. Prepare a bouquet garni (tuck dried lemongrass into a small, porous pouch along with the ginger and garlic. Tie shut).

Place all the broth ingredients in a large stock pot and bring to a boil, then lower the heat to medium-low. Simmer for 10 minutes, then strain the broth, discard the vegetables and herbs. Pour the broth back into the pot, cover and place over low heat (as low as possible) to keep warm.

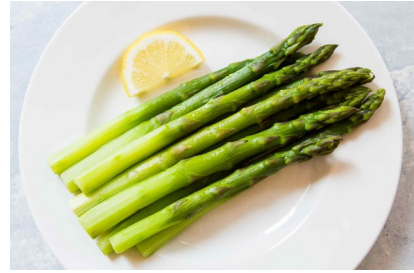
While you're cooking the broth, warm the cooking sherry in a separate, small saucepan over medium heat.

Slice the asparagus into ½ inch pieces, removing any of the tough parts from the bottom of the stem. Separate tips from the stems and place each in separate small bowls.

In a medium-sized heavy-bottomed pot, sauté the asparagus tips in 1 tablespoon of the oil over medium heat until the tips are bright green and crisp-tender, 3-4 minutes. Return them to their small bowl. Add 1 more tablespoon of oil to the pot and sauté the sliced asparagus pieces until crisp-tender, 5-6 minutes. Add the basil and mint, sauté for 30 seconds, remove from the heat, and set the sliced asparagus mixture aside in a small bowl separate from the tips.

Add the remaining oil to the pot. Sauté the shallots and garlic, stirring occasionally, until shallots are very soft and just starting to brown, 6-8 minutes. Stir in the chili pepper and rice, and sauté for about 8 minutes, until the rice smells slightly toasted. Add the cooking sherry and stir constantly until the liquid is absorbed.

Ladle about ½ cup of the broth at a time into the rice, stirring constantly until each addition is absorbed. Stir and cook until the rice is creamy but still al dente. When the broth is almost gone, stir the sugar and lime juice into the last of the broth before adding to the risotto. You may add additional vegetable broth in ¼ cup increments if the broth runs out and the rice isn't cooked enough yet. This will take about 35 minutes. Stir the asparagus stems (not the tips) into the risotto and cook for another 5-10 minutes, until the asparagus has reached desired tenderness. Garnish individual servings with the sautéed asparagus tips, chopped roasted peanuts, and lime wedges.



Somerset County Conservancy

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HELP US SPREAD THE WORD!

Pass this newsletter on to a friend and ask them to join.

Enclosed is: \$ 20 Individual Member

\$ 30 Family Member

\$ 75 Sustaining Member

\$100 Patron, Club, Organization Member

\$750 Lifetime Member

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