



Somerset County Conservancy A Charitable Trust

www.somersetcountyconservancy.org

Newsletter

Spring 2020

A Walk In Our Woods

By Roger Latuch



It was mid-April, with a robin's snow filling the evening sky, when I had this urge for a walk in our woods. I knew the hemlocks of Kimberly Run would be dusted with a frosty white, but what I didn't expect to find so early in the season were the well-traveled paths. Whatever it is that you perceive it to be, "welcome to the new normal". With so many event gatherings being closed, people are trekking to our open spaces and parks. Despite most amenities being closed, folks are enjoying social distancing on the trails in record numbers. If any good comes of this situation, it will hopefully be that we will not take so many things for granted and have we will have a deeper appreciation for our local outdoor recreation. Necessity will have us learning a new way to do the things we love. For those who already enjoy solitude, the bump in the road will be felt less. My favorite river trips are solo, but I recently found myself not being able to just bum a ride at the end of the run. Hopefully this will come to pass and we will have learned and will be better for it. Stay safe and enjoy.



Black-throated Green Warbler

Spring is Time to Go Birding!

By Jeff Payne

Our local birds are being joined by waves of migrants both passing through and stopping here to breed. Ample opportunities exist locally to both see the colorful Neotropical migrants and to revel in their annual spring chorus.

Kimberly Run Natural Area has a nice assortment of thrushes, warblers, vireos, flycatchers, sparrows and more in the mixed hemlock/ hardwood forest, fields and swamps. The numerous Black-throated Green Warblers broadcast their “zee zee zee Zoo zee” all along the Blue and White trails. The Black and White and Magnolia Warblers and Ovenbirds are a little more local. Up to five thrush species can be heard and with a little luck, Brown Creepers and both Louisiana and Northern Waterthrushes can be found. Watch the fields for Tree Swallows, American Kestrel and maybe even a Northern Harrier.

Somerset Lake Nature Park is an identified Important Bird Area by the National Audubon Society with over 250 species of birds being identified there. The lake being drained for repairs certainly temporarily detracts from the ambience. The huge mudflat will, however, have one silver lining this spring—it will be a magnet for migrating shorebirds. Usually rare and hard to find in PA, the lake being slowly drawn down since 2012 has attracted at least 32 species of these tundra breeders. Don’t wait too long though, once the mud grows up in thick vegetation they will not stop. The Somerset Lake Action Committee of the SCC has been working on a proposal to create some habitat at the north end of the lake which would create both underwater habitat for fish and possibly some ephemeral mud for these interesting birds.

So get out, take a walk, look around, and keep your ears open. Both KRNA and SLNP will always reward one with interesting nature observations.



Short-billed Dowitcher



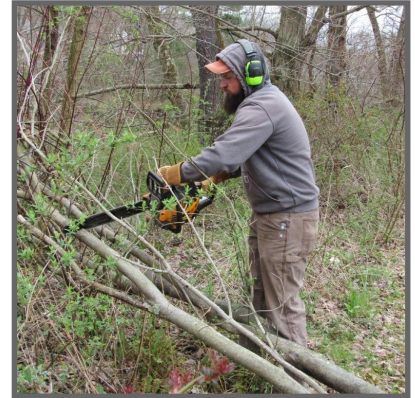
American Avocet

Mallards Rest

By Len Lichvar

Recently my son and former Conservancy intern Logan Lichvar and myself spent time removing deadfalls, picking up litter, replacing signs and other maintenance work at the Boswell Passive Treatment System at Mallards Rest. Aside from accomplishing some needed work we also wanted to demonstrate that efforts such as this are still permissible under the pandemic state of emergency orders as long as social distancing and other requirements are followed.

As an update we at the Somerset Conservation District are operating as best we can in the office as needed and remotely as well. Our building is closed to the public, but we can still be reached by phone or email. It is important that the natural resources of the region not be neglected during this otherwise difficult time.



Logan Lichvar clears a deadfall on the walking trail at Mallards Rest

Trail Challenges at KRNA

By Bob Hook

The frequent high winds across Somerset County this winter and early spring have made keeping the popular scenic walking trails at KRNA open for use very difficult. Besides the usual removal of small to medium size branches in order to accommodate hikers and dog walkers, this year numerous large trees, mostly hemlocks, have fallen across trails. Thanks in large part to SCC Board of Directors, these hazards and exercise obstructions have been promptly removed. Please contact Jim or any other SCC board member if you would be willing to help with this ongoing trail maintenance. And by all means, enjoy the trails amidst the natural beauty of KRNA.

Trout Stocking 2020

By Bob Hook

Again this year, the SCC Board of Directors approved a donation to one of our partner organizations, the Casselman River Watershed Association, for the stocking of 150 trout in Kimberly Run within the boundaries of Kimberly Run Natural Area. The brown trout were provided by the Salisbury-Elklick Hunting Club and delivered by them also.

As has been the case with most meeting and event schedules this spring, changes in the original stocking plan had to be made. The fish were to arrive on April 14, but instead had to be delivered one week earlier. In addition to having very little time to contact SCC volunteers to stock on such short notice, students from SCC board member, Jenn Brougher's Environmental Science Club were not available to help this year since all schools were closed due to the Coronavirus pandemic.

As always, the conservancy encourages voluntary catch-and-release fishing at KRNA to give more anglers an opportunity to catch trout over a longer period of time. Clipping hook barbs or using barbless hooks and carefully releasing fish are helpful in this effort. All Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission regulations apply, including purchase of a trout stamp.

INVASIVE PLANTS

By Pam Diesel

An "invasive species" is defined as a species that is non-native to the ecosystem under consideration and whose introduction causes or is likely to cause economic or environmental harm or harm to human health.

There are many invasive species in Pennsylvania so there will only be a few select ones described in this article.

Multiflora Rose, *Rosa multiflora* was cultivated as an ornamental for erosion control and as a living fence. This plant forms dense thickets that invade pastures and crowd out native species. To remove the plant by mechanical means would be cutting the entire plant up to six times a year for 2 to 4 years. Chemical methods can be used with the herbicide glycosate which can be placed on the cut stems. The final method is biological with the native Rose rosette disease.



Giant hogweed, a Class A noxious weed, is a toxic perennial that reaches 15 feet tall. In sun, sap that contacts skin can cause severe blisters and even scars. Stems have reddish-purple bumps and stiff white hairs. hairy leaf ribs but hairless leaf undersides. Mid-May to July, produces 2-foot-wide umbrella-shaped clusters of small white flowers that go to seed in July.



Giant hogweed is a public health hazard, hogweed's clear, watery sap has toxins that cause photo-dermatitis. Skin contact followed by exposure to sunlight produces painful, burning blisters that may develop into purplish or blackened scars.

If you think the plant is giant hogweed please report it to the extension office. Do not touch and wear protective clothing if you cut it and place it in a black garbage bag. This plant has been found in Somerset county.

Tree of heaven spreads aggressively both by seeds and vegetatively by root sprouts, re-sprouting rapidly after being cut. It is considered a shade-intolerant tree and cannot compete in low-light situations, though it is sometimes found competing with hardwood.

Mechanical methods of control do not work for Tree of Heaven. Only herbicides work if used in mid to late summer. Roots must be killed to remove this tree. Methods include foliar, basal bark and hack and squirt methods. Herbicides include glycosate and triclopyr. This tree is the preferred host of the spotted lantern fly which is major problem in eastern Pennsylvania and could be headed our way.

Pennsylvania has 13 noxious weeds. They are Bull thistle, Canada thistle, Giant hog weed, Goat's rue, Jimson weed, Johnson grass, Kudzu, Marijuana, Mile-a-minute, Musk thistle, Multiflora rose, purple loosestrife, Shatterane.

The Call to Arms

By Rebecca Raupach

As the late, great Leonard Cohen wrote, "There is a crack in everything. That's how the light gets in." The pandemic's disturbance of our lives indeed has some potential silver linings. Now more than ever, the urge to cultivate something beautiful and useful in times of great stress and uncertainty is building. This urge is taking shape in many forms, including new bakers making sourdough bread starters, and the renaissance return to vegetable gardening. Born in the wake of the 1918 influenza outbreak and World War I, the first such call to arms to embrace home gardens emerged. At that time, we lost more Americans to the flu than we did to the battlefield. Between World War I and World War II, there was a slackening in the home gardening movement, but with the food rationing set in place during World War II, victory gardens bloomed anew.

People's eagerness to build their own community-based food security and to help war time efforts was so great that, at one point, it is estimated that home, school, and community gardeners produced close to forty percent of the nation's fresh vegetables, from about twenty million gardens. Today's farm-to-table movement along with the do-it-yourself ethos jives nicely with a return to home gardening. Beyond the wealth of often free education of the United States Department of Agriculture, state extension office, and local garden clubs, one need only search Google or YouTube for "gardening how-to". With the country falling between planting zones three through nine, nearly all gardeners are able to begin growing their own food, whether planting out, or starting seeds indoors. As a gardener, I learn so much every year, especially from fellow gardeners, and am grateful for the enrichment of my local farmer's market. Fortunately, my local market, having been deemed essential by our governor, has hopeful plans for an opening day in late May. Having long been not only a market customer, but also a member of a CSA (community supported agriculture) share offered by farmers, I appreciate the movement to support local, small business.

In days of ever increasingly industrialized agriculture, the unreliability of this food system, growing our own and/or supporting local, small business is an imperative. Farmer's market operators around the country are already demonstrating their ability to innovate and develop best practices, while supplying a product passing through fewer hands than in retail outlets. One exciting, grassroots non-profit to watch is the Experimental Farm Network, which connects farmers, amateur gardeners, researchers while providing projects and seed sales. With no shortage of ways to be the change, I look forward this season to receiving and sharing saved seeds and homegrown food with friends, family and neighbors. I hope so much that all you fellow conservationists do, also. Stay safe, be well, and take care.

sources: Hayden Smith, Rose. *Sowing the Seeds of Victory: American Gardening Projects of World War I*

National War Garden Commission. *War Gardening and Home Storage of Vegetables*. Library of Congress

Official Pennsylvania Government Website: media.pa.gov Wolf Administration: *Agriculture is Essential for a Safe and Reliable Food Supply*.

KRNA Trails

By Jim Moses



Kimberly Run Natural Area has approximately five miles of walking trails. They are marked with Blue or White blazes and a map is posted at all intersections. Benches have been placed at strategic locations and board walks placed across muddy wet areas. Upkeep and maintenance of the trails is done by



Conservancy board members, Summer Intern's and Boy Scout Eagle candidates or Troops needing community service projects. Improvements planned for this summer include some extensions of the boardwalks, steps on slippery grades and replacement of the vinyl trail markers with painted trail blaze marks.

The wet and windy spring conditions always bring fallen trees and wet spots, we try to remove these as soon as possible. We've identified some invasive species of plants along portions of the trail and plan to attempt to remove them this summer. Mowing the grassy areas and weed whipping along the trail corridors are chores usually assigned to our summer intern(s).

We invite anyone suffering from Cabin Fever or needing a place during home schooling to get out and explore nature in this trying time to get out and take a walk on our trails. Pets and children are especially welcome.

Please practice social distancing.



KRNA on Social Media

We have started a Group on Facebook for our trail users to communicate with us as well as communicate with each other. It's called **"Kimberly Run Natural Area Trails Group"** and is available to anyone who would like to join. Already participants have posted about the trails, bird sightings, fishing and trees falling across the trails. It is our hope that this site will be used to better trail users experience and encourage them to become members of the Conservancy.



We Need You!

Please remember that the entire operating budget of the Somerset County Conservancy and the Kimberly Run Natural Area are maintained by memberships and contributions. If you have already renewed your membership for 2020, 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. Let's do all we can to spread the word about the great works of the Somerset County Conservancy!



**WE'RE ON
FACEBOOK!**

Somerset County Conservancy
Box 241
Somerset, PA 15501

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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