



Somerset County Conservancy A Charitable Trust

www.somersetcountyconservancy.org

Newsletter

Spring 2021

President's Message

by Jeff Payne

It is with excitement and a bit of trepidation that I take over the helm from Jim Moses who has fearlessly, faithfully, and with great dedication and countless hours of work led the Conservancy for most of the years since our inception in 1994.

During his tenure the SCC has assumed ownership of multiple parcels of land upon which, with the work of many other organizations and government agencies, treatment systems for abandoned mine drainage have been constructed. These systems have contributed to greatly improved water quality in the Stonycreek River, Quemahoning Creek, and Casselman River which benefits the citizens of Somerset County and all those downstream. Many of our sites, such as Hawk View, Oak's Trail, and Mallard's Rest have trails or are otherwise used by the public.



*President, Jeff Payne, presenting a plaque to
Jim Moses for his service and dedication*

Under Jim's guidance the SCC has also established and developed Kimberly Run Natural Area as a popular area for outdoor education, nature study, hiking, fishing and hunting. This 370+ acre parcel is the result of putting together some old state hospital property with the Beachy Wetlands and Florence additions and, with years of trail development and habitat improvements, it has become a mid-Somerset County jewel. Jim has steered the ship through fundraising, grant writing, and sub-committees such as the Somerset Lake Action Committee which played an important role in advocating

for the replacement of the lake's dam and helped establish the agreement for Somerset Lake Nature Park. He steps down as President with a long list of remarkable achievements, but as an active Board member we know that list will continue to grow!

With those very large shoes to fill, we embark on what we hope is our post-Covid year. The goals for this year are to sponsor frequent activities that make use of our wonderful outdoor assets, do some more improvements at Somerset Lake, and search for a site to do an emergent wetland creation. It is my hope to get more members involved with some of the activities and works of our organization and to encourage many new members to join us.

Kimberly Run Natural Area

Winter Tree Identification

by Jeff Payne

On January 16, the first, monthly series of programs was held at KRNA. Jeff Payne led a small, but enthusiastic group around the cabin trail explaining how to identify different trees in the winter when leaves are not present to aid in identification.

Hopefully, the interest shown on this cold winter day will lead to the ever-growing use of KRNA.

It turned out to be a rather cold, snowy, and blustery day, but a few intrepid souls walked the trails. Attendees learned how to use bark, tree shape, tree buds and fallen leaves to identify the many tree species at KRNA.

Of course, the Hunter Kimmel Eagle Scout project completed last year sure helped!



Winter Snowshoeing

by Jeff Payne and Jim Moses

On February 20 the Conservancy sponsored a Winter Ski / Snowshoe walk at the Kimberly Run Natural Area. We enjoyed a bit of true Somerset County winter and despite our day's windy, 12-degree temperature, we had 19 hardy souls show up for the snowshoeing event with one person cross-country skiing using the snowshoer's packed-down trails.



It took some time to get all the participants fitted with the proper gear and on their way; consequently, the group was very dispersed throughout the trails. The snow was knee

deep and the weather was cloudy. However, a little, blue sky peaked out and the powder drifting down from the trees made for a memorable outing.

We skied and snowshoed for about two hours, and a great time was had by all.





Waterfowl Identification

by Jeff Payne

The SCC sponsored this outing at Shawnee State Park on March 20. We had a great attendance of 31 people from the Conservancy, the Allegheny Plateau Audubon, and a few others who heard about the event. The leaders of the trip, Chris and Rebecca Payne, Wayne Seier, and Jeff Payne were actually worried that the weather was too nice for a good waterfowl showing with blue skies and 50 degrees temperatures. Not to worry, the lake presented 19 species of

ducks, geese, swans, loons, and grebes, and all participants had the ability to view them through binoculars and spotting scopes while the finer points of ID were discussed.

There were five different Bald Eagles sighted, the first Osprey and Common Loon of the season. Counting all the various land birds there were over 50 species found by the group.

Bluebird Box Roundup Spring 2021

by Fred Will

The bluebird boxes on Bluebird Trail were checked and cleaned. About 90 percent of the boxes showed evidence of use by Tree Swallows. After some discussion, it was determined that since Bluebirds are mainly ground feeders and Tree Swallows feed mostly on flying insects, the lack of larger mowed areas and the abundance of water retention ponds lead to the larger populations of Tree Swallows. But this can be viewed as an asset since mosquitos are the main food source of Tree Swallows. The possibility of mowing larger areas to encourage more Bluebird nesting has been discussed and might be added to this summer's to-do list.



On March 27, a beautiful spring day, Scout Troop 52906 helped install 12 new, bluebird boxes they hand-painted over the winter. The boxes were made and donated by the PA Game Commission. The early March box cleanout proved that the painted boxes the Scouts installed two years ago were accepted and appreciated by both Tree Swallows and Bluebirds. This makes a total of 24 beautifully painted boxes the Girl Scouts have helped install in the past three years.

A big **THANK YOU** to Troop 52906 and their leaders. It was a great day, enjoyed by all. I am sure this will lead to many more fun and helpful projects in the future.

Forest Insect Infestations

by Pam Diesel



Hemlock Woolly Adelgid, Figure 1

The most obvious sign of a **Hemlock Woolly Adelgid** infestation is the white, filamentous masses of wax produced by females (*Fig. 1*). These white masses exist throughout the season and into the next year, even after insects are dead.

The females are black, oval, soft-bodied, and about 2 mm long. They are concealed under their characteristic white-waxy mass. Host plants are injured by the adelgids inserting their piercing-sucking mouthparts into the base of the needles and removing plant fluids. Moderate hemlock woolly adelgid populations may cause a reduction in tree health. Severe infestations may result in premature needle drop.

The best time to manage this pest is late September through October. Soil injection of systemic insecticides labeled for management of this pest may be applied by commercial applicators around large trees. Early spring soil injections usually work best against this pest when sufficient soil moisture exists. Extreme winter cold can also destroy this pest.



The **Emerald Ash Borer** is destroying ash trees in Pennsylvania. The adult beetles eat ash foliage but cause little damage. The larvae feed on the inner bark of ash trees, disrupting the tree's ability to transport water and nutrients.

Presence of the emerald ash borer typically goes undetected until trees show symptoms of being infested, usually, the upper third of a tree will thin and then die back. This is usually followed by a large number of shoots or branches arising below the dead portions of the trunk. Woodpecker activity can be an indication that an ash tree is infested with larvae.

Other symptoms of infestation include small D-shaped exit holes in the bark where adults have emerged, vertical splits in the bark, and distinct serpentine-shaped tunnels beneath the bark where larvae effectively stop food and water movement in the tree, starving it to death.

Dead trees located in yards, near buildings, or are street trees, will likely become hazardous trees and should be removed immediately by a reputable tree company. *(continued on Page 5)*

Somerset Lake Action Committee Updates

by Jeff Payne

It was a busy winter for SLAC as the Somerset Lake Dam project is nearing completion. We had raised money for the PA Fish Commission to show the community's support for the project which was a necessary step to leverage the state funds needed to replace the dam. The money raised was put into materials for fish habitat which was developed and constructed by the PFBC's habitat division. Several loads of hemlock boards, 1400 treated fence poles, many truckloads of limestone rock, grass seeds, and fasteners were purchased.

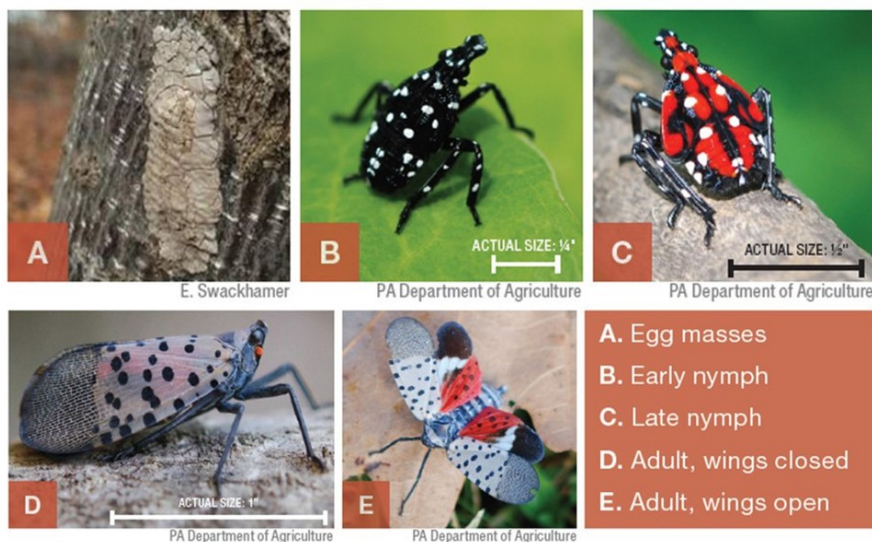
The nearly \$50,000 of materials built many fish habitat structures. Part of our plans included having the PFBC's equipment and operators construct a series of shallow submerged peninsulas which, during drawdowns or droughty times, will make habitat for migrating shorebirds. Also, we had constructed an island and fishing hole with rock habitat in front of Siemon's nursing home where SLAC is in the planning and permitting phase of constructing a handicap-accessible, partially-covered, fishing platform.



Forest Insect Infestations

continued from Page 4

Spotted Lantern Fly (SPL) has not arrived in Somerset County but has been spreading across the state. It is important to know the various life stages of this pest as shown below. The lantern fly does not bite or sting.



It does not kill all plants it infects but stresses the plant so other disease may destroy the plant.

As of May 2020, 26 counties in PA are under quarantine for SLF. Check your car and any outdoor equipment (grills, mowers, firewood, etc.) when going in and out of the quarantine zones.

KRNA Trails

Trees Down on White Trail

by Jim Moses

Heavy winds this spring are causing havoc on some of our walking trails at Kimberly Run Natural Area, especially the White Trail. This large Eastern Hemlock came down



in high winds near Jacob Craig's shelter/table. The tree was 22 inches in diameter and rotten to the point when we tried to roll sections off the trail it broke into pieces. This was done by our 2021 summer intern, Nathan Wingard, supervised by Jim Moses, SCC Land Manager.



Cicada Season

by Rebecca Raupach



It's that time again...the return of the periodical cicadas, or insects that belong to the order *Hemiptera* (true bugs). Brood X or Great Eastern Brood is the largest brood of 17-year cicadas, numbering in the billions. Coming out of the ground to molt and mate, Brood X will be emerging in 15 states this May or June. Areas of PA in the emergence, include SCC's own Somerset County. This harmless, native species of insect is not invasive, although this spring is not a good time to plant small trees, as the females lay their eggs in young tree branches, according to the U.S. National Park Service. Males of the species first come above-ground singing a loud, mating call. Female cicadas do not sing, yet wait quietly to do their job laying eggs, up to 600, before they die. This synchronized emergence occurring in prime numbers is thought to be a survival tactic used to evade predators.

The fascinating, natural phenomenon takes place for about six to eight weeks, during which time we get to enjoy the *****loud***** show. Cicadas do not bite or sting, and the carcasses can be added to compost piles. Other benefits of the cicadas include a feast for wildlife. Some adventurous diners eat cicadas, although it's not recommended if you have shellfish allergies. Entomologists have long relied on local reports from the public to help map periodical cicadas. Tracking can be accomplished through downloading the Cicada Safari app developed by Gene Kritsky, Dean of Behavioral and Natural Sciences, Mount St. Joseph University in Cincinnati. The app is available gratis for both Android and iOS and can be found online at <http://cicadasafari.org/>.

KRNA on Social Media



The **Kimberly Run Natural Area Trails** Facebook Group has proven to be a very successful way to communicate Conservancy events and KRNA experiences.

Group members have not only posted bird sightings but also fallen trees across the trails to alert other users and groundskeeper of safety hazards.

We encourage all members to share their KRNA experiences on this social media group and to invite their friends and family to join the Kimberly Run Natural Area Trails FB Group.

Thank You!!!

A big THANK YOU to everyone who completed and submitted the 2020 Members Survey. The twenty-eight responses received will help direct the Conservancy on the activities and programs that interest you.

We would also like to thank those who volunteered to assist with future programs. Volunteers are the life-blood of the organization. We appreciate your willingness to share your expertise and look forward to your enthusiasm. We cannot complete our mission without you!

Please remember that memberships fund the entire Conservancy's operating budget and the Kimberly Run Natural Area maintenance. Thank you to all who have renewed. If you have not already renewed or would like to become a new member, please complete the form on the last page of this newsletter and send it in.

Thank you!!!

Help Our Facebook Page Grow!



We need your assistance to keep the **Somerset County Conservancy** Facebook page current and are looking for 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 Somerset County Conservancy and its accomplishments!

Somerset County Conservancy
Box 241
Somerset, PA 15501

Make check payable to: **Somerset County Conservancy**
and mail to: **PO Box 241, Somerset, PA 15501**

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

E-Mail: _____

- Enclosed is: \$ 20 Individual Member
- \$ 30 Family Member
- \$ 75 Sustaining Member
- \$100 Patron, Club, Organization Member
- \$750 Lifetime Member
- \$1,000 Corporate Member

HELP US SPREAD THE WORD!
Pass this newsletter on to a friend and ask them to join.



Somerset Co. Conservancy
P.O. Box 241
Somerset, PA 15501

Send all submissions for
future newsletters to: