



Somerset County Conservancy A Charitable Trust

www.somersetcountyconservancy.org

Newsletter

Spring 2022

President's Message Spring 2022

Jeff Payne

Trumpets were blowing and birds were singing on March 1 when the SCC closed on the Menser Farm Preserve addition to Kimberly Run Natural Area. We thank the John Menser and Beverly Minick families for working with us toward the shared vision of keeping this long-time family property undeveloped and open to the public. This 273 acre addition to the existing 373 acre KRNA creates a mosaic of habitats and protected corridors for wildlife and flora into the future.

The initial response to our fundraiser for this project has been phenomenal. First and foremost, recognition and a special thank you go out to Doug and Elena Brant, whose contribution as double Mighty Oaks got us halfway to our goal! A hearty thanks also to Somerset Trust Company who, with their pledge at the Keystone Hemlock level, once again demonstrated their commitment to improving Somerset County for all residents and visitors. Combine these fantastic gifts with more than 75 other generous donations and we have raised \$180,000.00 of the \$200,000.00 needed for the match for the hoped for DCNR Community Conservation Partnership Program grant. We are presently applying for this grant to complete the acquisition phase of this project. To help us finish reaching our goal, see our website www.somersetconservancy.org.

Our activity schedule for the year is also full with local experts leading the events. Accounts of completed walks, snowshoe event and waterfowl identification will follow. Hopefully you all will be able to attend some of the upcoming Spring flora, amphibian, campfire and picnic events planned for the year. In addition, some of our "activities" for the year will include work parties at our new property for cleanup, gate construction and trail building. If you might be interest in volunteering for these types of projects, please let us know at mail@somersetconservancy.org.

We are also in the midst of our annual membership drive. It is all of you folks with your renewed memberships and donations that support the annual budget which keeps the Conservancy going. Your all-volunteer board needs your continuing help. If you already have renewed, we thank you! If not, please take a moment to do so. And, if we all invite just one new member or buy them a gift membership, it will benefit all our projects into the future.



**We would like to recognize all the donors, to date, for the
Menser Farm addition to KRNA**

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Doug & Elena Brant

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Pollinator Friendly Gardens

By Pam Diesel

Why plant a pollinator friendly garden? Pollinators are facing many problems today since many of their natural habitats are being developed. Development fragments their habitat and decreases the flowers they need. Disease, pesticides, changing climate, and parasites add to the decline in pollinators.



One of the ways to help pollinators is by providing plants have pollen and nectar. Chose plants that are native to your area, Natives grow well without fertilizers and pesticides. Secondly, choose nectar and pollen-rich plants of various shapes, sizes, and colors. Diversity is the key to a good pollinator garden since each pollinator needs different flowers.

When choosing plants pick those with multiple flower heads such as Joe Pye Weed, Goldenrod, and Milkweed, and avoid modern hybrids. Always chose plants that bloom from early spring to late fall.

The following plants are great for pollinators: clustered mountain mint, boneset, and those listed above. Other native plants: purple coneflowers, blanket flower, beardtongue, bee balm, wild geranium, oxeye sunflower, cardinal flower, blue lobelia, Sun drop, garden phlox, New York ironweed, and wild Sweet William are good choices.

In summary, creating a pollinator garden can make a positive impact for our pollinators.



Cold Day Duck Identification a Success

By Jeff Payne



We had to postpone by a day our waterfowl identification outing at Shawnee State Park due to a late-season snowstorm featuring high winds and whiteouts. The morning of March 13 dawned cold—about 10 degrees F.—but clear and ice free. The stalwart participants were awarded with 22 waterfowl species, consisting of swans, geese, ducks, grebes, and cormorants, as well as 43 other bird species including over a dozen eagles, other hawks, 3 species of gull, and many songbirds. Led by Scott Bastian, Chris and Rebecca Payne, and Jeff Payne, there were great scope looks at most all of the birds and detailed identification tips and natural history facts shared.

As the day slowly warmed, we were treated to an invitation to visit the Allegheny Plateau Audubon's Dunning's Creek Wetlands, a short drive north of Shawnee. This wonderful complex, along with the nearby Whitetail Wetlands, consist of over 100 acres of shallow ponds, planted native vegetation, trails and an observation blind all constructed in the 1990 to early 2000's. It has become a wildlife mecca attracting well over 200 bird species as well as many fish, amphibians, and mammals. We all enjoyed a long walk and up close looks at wildlife and appreciated the opportunity to visit.

Snowshoe / Cross Country Ski Event's

By Jim Moses

On January 23, 2022, SCC held its first member's activity event of 2022. About two dozen members attended a beautiful, cold and snowy snowshoe hike at Kimberly Run Natural Area. After gearing up, we hiked from the parking area out the Tractor Trail to the pavilion, around the Bluebird Trail, and back to the Blue Trail to the Parking area. It was a great day of snowshoeing.

Our February 20 snowshoe event was much different. The weather had warmed considerably and the snow had melted, our hike this day turned out to be a walk in the woods. Everyone had a good time, and it seemed as though Spring was coming early this year and no one was complaining.



Fish Stocking 2022

By Jim Moses



The SCC once again stocked 150 beautiful Brook Trout into Kimberly Run in the middle of KRNA. The fish are raised by the Casselman River Watershed Association and they were delivered the day before the Kid's day opener for the trout season. Thank you to Don Anderson and helper who delivered the fish and to the SCC volunteers who ran them up the stream in buckets. Going fishing is yet another way of enjoying KRNA!

Somerset Lake Action Committee

By Jeff Payne

"The stars may be aligning and this may be the year that we finally see the waters of Somerset Lake restored, a long 10 years from the first visit," stated, of then, Executive Director of the PA Fish and Boat Commissioner, John Arway. He told the assembled crowd that our lake was in danger of being drained and that without a citizen's group to advocate for OUR lake we may be well down the list of getting the necessary dam repairs done. No one else in the community was stepping forward to lead the charge and the SCC decided to form a subcommittee (SLAC) to embrace the challenge.

Innumerable hours, and many partnerships later, we now have the beginnings of what can become a sparkling centerpiece of outdoor experiences with the County's Somerset Lake Nature Park. We have a new dam to survive the ages, abundant fish structure in the lake bed, a new multi-use trail, beautiful pavilions, signs, and a handicap accessible fishing platform. Recently, thanks to the coordinating work of Larry Adams, a group of Somerset County Parks Board staff and SLAC volunteers planted 16 large potted trees at the north end of the lake. The trees, paid for by SLAC contributors, are staked, fenced or tubed, and marked and will be a beautiful addition to the Park.

To all the hard-working volunteers, the many financial contributors over the years, the County Commissioners, our state representatives and agency personnel, a hardy thank you goes out. Much work remains to be done on the Park, but the vision and ground work are laid to make this a jewel of a centerpiece for County residents and our many visitors.



Creature Feature: Pink Ladyslipper

By Scott Bastian

Have you ever seen a Pink Ladyslipper? It is one of the most attractive wildflowers that may be found within the boundaries of Kimberly Run -- one might suggest the same for across the whole of the northeastern United States. It has two opposite basal leaves with conspicuous parallel veins and a large pink flower at the end of an erect stalk about a foot in height. There may rarely be a white form of the flower or, as rare, two flowers on one stalk. The derivation of the name is simple: the large and showy pink blooms resemble a pretty slipper for around the foot. For that reason, the plant is also called moccasin flower.

The Pink Ladyslipper (*Cypripedium acaule*) is a member of the Orchid Family of flowers, and orchids are highly prized quarry among botanists of our region. As a group, orchids are often both attractive and rare. The "rare" part is because they typically require specialized habitat to survive. Importantly, the soil must have a type of fungus from the *Rhizoctonia* genus that will nourish the new seeds produced from the plant; and then obtain nutrients in return from the mature plant's root system later. Such symbiosis is common with the orchids. Normal habitat soils are acid and well-drained, most often in mixed hardwood forests and on mossy slopes under pine or hemlock.

Pink Ladyslipper takes many years to go from seed to mature plants. They can live to be twenty years old or more. Bumble Bees and other bees do the work of pollination. They enter through the slit in the front of the bloom and then exit at the base of the bloom, trading pollen along the way from other flower entries. Indiscriminate picking of the blooms has made this orchid much scarcer across its range. Please do not try to transplant this species – it is a very difficult task even for gardeners with much experience.

Ladyslipper roots were long ago used as a remedy for nervousness, menstruation issues, tooth pain, and muscle spasms. Centuries past, it and other orchids were also used as a substitute for the European plant valerian for its sedative properties.

There is an easy fix if your "flower list" does not include this species. Park your car in the lot for Kimberly Run Natural Area in late May or early June and scan the banks along the roadway entrance going in to the park – perhaps twenty yards behind the large map sign. Four plants bloomed there last year. They may also be found elsewhere within the park, but the plant station behind the sign is easy access for anyone with limited mobility. Within Somerset County, the flower is also not terribly difficult to find along certain mountain roads in Glencoe.

Make plans to join the Somerset County Conservancy's wildflower walk on Sunday, May 22nd to see this enchanting beauty up close and personal.



Save the Dates!

April 9	7:30 p.m. Frog walk at KRNA
April 23	Earth Day event Uptown Somerset
May 22	1:00 p.m. Wildflower walk at KRNA
June 26	1:00 p.m. Stream study at KRNA
July 16	7:30 p.m. Night time at KRNA

Spring Bird Box Maintenance

By Fred Will

In late February the Bluebird boxes on Bluebird trail at Kimberly Run Nature Area were checked and cleaned. It is important to clean out all bird boxes early in the spring or late winter. Clean out all previous years nesting material and any residue found in the box. It is also common to find field mice nests built over the winter. The spring cleaning should take care of this problem for the rest of the summer, but it is always a good idea to check boxes several times a year. If done carefully this should not discourage nesting. Some birds especially, tree swallows are very protective of their nests, so be prepared to dodge dive-bombing parents.

This year's clean out showed 23 out of 24 boxes had Bluebird or tree swallow nests. Some unhatched eggs and a few dead fledglings were found, but after talking to some bird aficionados, this is a common problem based on the weather conditions at nesting time. On the bright side there were probably 75 to 100 new insect-eating birds added. It is estimated one tree swallow can eat up to 800 to 1000 flying insects a day, so they help you enjoy your walks on the trails with fewer mosquitoes and other flying pests.

You will also notice almost all the boxes have beautiful paint jobs. Over the past three to four years, Girl Scout Troop 52906 have painted boxes made and donated by the Pennsylvania Game Commission. Then in early spring, the girls and their leader have come out and helped to replace old broken boxes. A big THANK YOU to the Girl Scout Troop. The birds also say Thank You, they love their new beautiful boxes

There are also a kestrel box and several wood duck boxes on site. These also require regular yearly maintenance. As you can see, we are doing the best we can to welcome our summer arial visitors.

SLAC working to improve the Wood Duck population at Somerset Lake

A crew of SLAC volunteers spent several hours after the tree planting to erect three new Wood Duck Nesting boxes at the north end of the lake and one near the newly constructed Fish Platform. Wood Duck Nesting Boxes have been installed and serviced on Somerset Lake for the past forty years and we want to continue that tradition.



Somerset County Conservancy
PO Box 241
Somerset, PA 15501

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