



Somerset County Conservancy A Charitable Trust

www.somersetcountyconservancy.org

Newsletter

Spring/Summer
2018

Earth Day

“Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing will get better, It's not”.

Dr. Suess

With this theme from The Lorax as the back drop, and at the invitation of Somerset Inc.'s executive director, Regina Coughenour, the Somerset County Conservancy and the Casselman River Watershed Association participated in the second annual Earth Day celebration in uptown Somerset on April 21. Children and their families followed an Earth Day Trail Map to learn about conservation, recycling, and environmental issues through educational presentations and hands-on activities. More than a dozen businesses were also involved in the well-attended four-hour event.

Several members of SCC were on hand in Trinity Park to offer information and publications regarding the Conservancy's mission and ongoing projects, especially the Kimberly Run Natural Area and Somerset Lake Nature Park.

SCC president Jim Moses and Treasurer Jeff Payne filled several pillowcases with an array of items such as a beaver pelt, a deer antler, and a sponge. The children reached into the bags, and without looking, tried to identify each object just by feeling it. The curious expressions, thoughtful guesses, and ensuing conservation-related discussions all made for an interesting activity.

SCC board member Bob Hook, with help from fellow board member, Rebecca Raupach and several CRWA members, used the watershed model provided by the Somerset Conservation District to simulate precipitation and the potential impact

of a variety of common pollutants on a typical watershed. The children enjoyed placing the scale model pieces to build a farm, housing development, factory, sewage treatment plant, mountain forest and a lake. And then by spraying the model with “rain” and specific “pollutants”, they could easily witness firsthand the effects of this combination of fluids as they flowed from the mountain top to the streams and eventually to the lake. The comments and questions from the children and their families proved that they got the point of this interactive demonstration.



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Membership Renewal

If you haven't renewed your SCC membership for 2018 please do it today. The application form is on the last page of the Newsletter.

Somerset Lake Action Committee Update-Spring 2018

Somerset Lake was completely drawn down in the fall of 2017 and a fish salvage was performed by the PA Fish and Boat Commission in anticipation of starting the replacement of the dam this spring. Unfortunately, delays in the permitting process are postponing the start of work until the spring of 2019 with a new completion date of fall 2021 for refilling. The lake was allowed to refill to about 1/3 pool after the fish salvage to limit erosion and attracted many migrant waterfowl this spring including over 3500 birds on April 19.

Meanwhile there is work being done on Somerset Lake Nature Park by the County Parks Board with money from a matching grant through SLAC and especially the efforts of Cassie Moon and Angie Tenant. Design work for the north parking area and first section of trail have been completed and it is expected will soon be put out for bids. The white ash trees in that area were attacked and killed last summer by the invasive emerald ash borer and about 80 dead, brittle trees were taken down over the winter. It is hoped that several stages of the Nature Park can be completed during the next 2 to 3 years so that a new, improved, community enhancing lake and park will be the culmination of many peoples' years of labor and advocacy.

A "Give a Dam" fundraiser was held May 18 to help finance the SLNP projects.

KRNA Education

The education programs at Kimberly Run Natural Area are expanding with the inclusion of grade 6 students from Somerset Area School districts. Students attended 2½ hour sessions on stream ecology and plant identification at Kimberly Run on May 14, 15, 16 and 18, 2018. Trained high school students of the Somerset Area Environmental Club assisted with the grade six students. The high school environmental students attended training at Kimberly Run on May 4, 2018 with their advisor, Jenn Brougher and conservancy education director Pam Diesel. Students were trained in proper stream analysis techniques and traveled the trails of KRNA so that they could take grade 6 students on a plant identification scavenger hunt.

Somerset Area high school biology students also completed a stream analysis of Kimberly Run on May 29 and 31. Students collected macroinvertebrates, stream vertebrates and completed stream analysis of chemical properties. Dissolved oxygen, pH, acidity, alkalinity, iron, and other parameters were assessed. Stream organisms found were caddisfly larvae, dragonfly larvae, crayfish, dobsonfly larvae, water striders, etc. Test results indicated a clean stream at Kimberly Run.

Somerset Takes To The Trail

The second annual Earth Day Trail took place on April 21st in Uptown Somerset. The event, put on by Somerset, Inc., is an educational event intended to inspire interest and environmental awareness in young children. This year, 14 businesses and organizations served as "Stops" on the trail, each offering a unique educational opportunity for the kids. The Trail received more than 120 kids with their families who kicked off their adventure with the "buzz about bees" at Uptown Works and grabbed a map that would lead them all around the community. The Somerset County Conservancy demonstrated their watershed model to the delight of eager children and their families in Trinity Park. Also in Trinity Park, the Casselman River Watershed Association taught children to make natural bird feeders from pine cones, peanut butter, and bird seed. Other Stops included an observation hive by Summer Smiles Honey Farm at Uptown Works, a birdhouse craft project by Laurel Arts at Haz Beanz Brewhouse Cafe, a seed giveaway at Findley's Pharmacy, Biodegradable planters at Somerset Drug Company, Composting with the Master Gardeners at Cascio's Fruit Market, Plastic Film recycling at Mary Biesecker Library, Trail Mix Making at Somerset Trust Company, Planter Pickup at Bellas Bakery, Dirt Stop at Essentials for Health, A Lorax Puppet Show at Young Heart Books and Toys, Seed Bomb Making at Uptown Painting Party, and Upcycled Watering Cans at First Christian Church. According to Executive Director, Regina Coughenour, "We are proud to put on an event that we feel represents who we are in Somerset. The Earth Day Trail, and the newfound partnerships with local conservation organizations, help us to educate our future generations and to share who we are with visitors. We are so grateful for such amazing organization, business and visitor participation and look forward to continued growth!"



Kimberly Run Natural Area

Birds in Spring & Early Summer

There are many reasons to take a hike around one of the many trails at KRNA, but a special treat in this season is seeing or hearing one of the many song birds which nests on the property. The fields and boxes attract Tree Swallows, Eastern Bluebirds, House Wrens, and even an American Kestrel was recently seen perched on the kestrel box. The mixed hemlock and hardwood forest attracts many species such as Black-throated Green and Magnolia Warblers, Blue-headed and Red-eyed Vireos, Brown Creepers, many woodpeckers, and the wonderful songsters Hermit and Wood Thrushes. A trip past the wetlands may produce Northern Waterthrush, Alder Flycatcher, or a Wood Duck.

So keep your eyes and ears open when walking and you may have a pleasant surprise!

Tree Seedling Planting at KRNA

The Pennsylvania Game Commission donated approximately 120 elderberry and hemlock tree seedlings to the Conservancy because we have over 500 acres of our property enrolled in the Hunter Access Program. Volunteers' gathered on April 26th to plant and fertilize the seedlings at the Kimberly Run Natural Area near Somerset.

Fish Stocking

For the last few years the SCC has been purchasing trout to stock in Kimberly Run within KRNA from the Salisbury-Elk lick Hunting Club co-op fish nursery. On April 11, Don Anderson delivered 200 brook trout ranging from 7-11". The minimum PFBC legal limit to keep a trout is 7" with a maximum of five fish. Voluntary catch and release fishing is encouraged at KRNA in order to give more anglers an opportunity to catch trout over a longer time period.

The brightly colored brookies were carefully netted into five gallon buckets and then quickly carried upstream and downstream for release into the shaded waters of Kimberly Run. Several SCC members and friends, as well as Somerset High School biology teacher, Jenn Brougher, and four enthusiastic boys from her Environmental Science Club, assisted with the stocking. The PFBC also provide some fish for KRNA, if possible, during its scheduled in-season stocking of Kimberly Run West of Route 219.

Kimberly Run Bluebird Nest Box Report

By Fred Will

On a cold and windy February 14, 2018, I checked and cleaned the Bluebird boxes at the KRNA. Of the 21 boxes checked, 8 contained Tree Swallow nests, 5 Bluebird nests and 8 unused. Several contained mouse nests on top of the used nests. The boxes were all cleaned or newly installed since the spring of 2017, so this is all activity of the past year. From my poorly kept notes, in 2017 (also February 14) I removed 8 Tree Swallow & 2 Bluebird. 2016, 10 Tree Swallows & 0 Bluebirds. I am glad to have Tree Swallows, but I hope this is an indication that more Bluebirds are returning each year.

A disturbing discovery was the remains of 3 young in one box and 1 in another, plus 2 unhatched eggs in a third box. From what I could tell they were all Bluebirds. I have also had this happen over the past few years in boxes around my house. I am going to try to keep a more constant watch and determine if this coincides with any farming or other spraying activity killing the adults.

I would also like to mention, in the past 3 years I have had 2 boxes destroyed by a bear. Both boxes had young Bluebirds in them. I do not know of any deterrent for this problem, but I guess Mother Nature has her own reason for this.

Also, on March 5 a ladder was taken in and used to check the Kestrel nest box that was erected last spring with the help of Somerset Rural Electric Cooperative. To my surprise the box contained a collection of dried grass stems covering the bottom of the box. They did not show evidence of being previously used as a nest, and since they were dried stems it seems likely they were placed there sometime since last fall. After talking with local bird expert Jeff Payne, who said although this is the start of the Kestrel nesting season this is not typical of a Kestrel nest. Again, more observation is needed. We always welcome observations of anyone visiting the Bluebird trail area.

I also placed a Kestrel nest box near my house. Late last summer a hive of honey bees set up house keeping in the box. I made arrangements with a local bee keeper to have the hive removed as soon as possible this spring. But upon opening the box in mid Feb. I discovered the bees had disappeared, leaving behind only a few dead bees lying on the bottom, and several empty wax combs attached to the ceiling. I did get a taste of some very sweet honey left in the bottom of one the combs, but have no idea what happened to the bees.



Spotted Lanternfly (*Lycorina delicatula*)



An invasive plant hopper, the Spotted Lanternfly, has overrun Southeastern Pennsylvania and will make Maryland by Spring 2018. A native of China, Vietnam, and parts of India, the insect first arrived with stone shipped from Asia to Berks County, PA. This pest has great potential to negatively impact the grape, fruit tree, hop, and logging industries. Additionally, the Spotted Lanternfly leaves decks, gardens, and patio furniture covered in sticky fluid, infests sooty mold on infested plants, and causes oozing or weeping on plants and trees; Tree of Heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*) is one of its preferred hosts. The pest latches on to hard surfaces and can travel long distances by cars, trucks and trains carrying infested material or items carrying egg masses.

The adult is a speckled, four-wing insect, approximately 1" long and 1/2" wide while at rest, and has no known predators. To know what to look for, visit

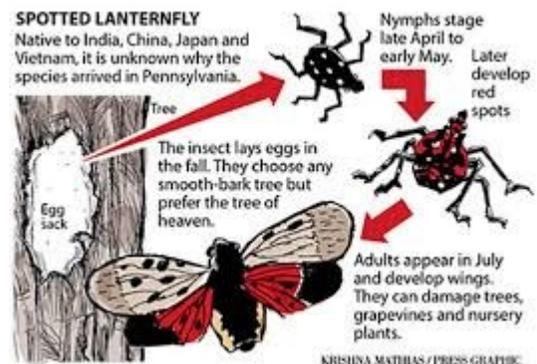
<https://extension.psu.edu>

If you find an insect that you suspect is the Spotted Lanternfly, please contact your local extension office or State Plant Regulatory Official to have the specimen identified properly. If you live outside of the current (quarantine area) in Pennsylvania and find a Spotted Lanternfly, report it to the PA Department of Agriculture by emailing a picture of any life stage to badbug@pa.gov or call 866-253-7189.

Sources: <http://www.extension.psu.edu>

www.aphis.usda.gov

<http://agriculture.pa.gov>



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!



Western Pennsylvania Conservancy Update

WPC recently received the donation of 84 acres along Whites Creek, a tributary to the Casselman River, in Addison Township, Somerset County, from Paul McMillan Jr.

The property is 7 miles southeast from the Great Allegheny Passage Trail Town of Confluence and the existing WPC's Casselman River Conservation Area along the GAP Trail and Casselman River. See link to primitive parking area along Whites Creek Road, a future goal will be to improve this area: <https://goo.gl/maps/6EmsPc7PcuL2>

The property is special, with its mature forests consisting mostly of hardwoods with hemlocks, and an understory including mountain laurel and rhododendron along White's Creek. The property falls within a priority landscape block on the Conservancy's conservation blueprint. Protecting this property will help to maintain the quality of Whites Creek, classified by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection as a "High Quality Cold Water Fishery" stream, and the larger Casselman River watershed. Whites Creek is a popular natural trout producing stream also stocked with trout by the PA Fish and Boat Commission. The property is also located within a recreational greenway corridor, "the Whites Creek Valley Trail" delineated in the Southern Alleghenies Greenways Plan and within Pennsylvania Audubon Society's Winding Ridge Forest Block Important Bird Area (IBA).

The Conservancy's goal is to manage the property as a natural area open to the public for passive outdoor recreation including nature study and fishing along Whites Creek – WPC's Whites Creek Valley Natural Area.

Jane Menchyk

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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 2018 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!!



Somerset County Conservancy

Box 241

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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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