



WESTMORELAND CONSERVANCY NEWSLETTER

www.westmorelandconservancy.org

April 2005 Editor: Shelly Tichy (724) 325-
5523 newsletter@westmorelandconservancy.org

Westmoreland Conservancy Scavenger Hunt

By Doug Bauman



Some of the organizers of the first Conservancy Scavenger Hunt. From left are: Cary Bohl, Richard Wagner, Shelly Tichy, Mount Fitzpatrick (under sign) and Cindy McCormick. Not pictured: Doug Bauman.

The Westmoreland Conservancy held its first scavenger hunt at the King Nature Reserve on February 26th. It was nice to see several large groups of people turn out on a winter's day. There was plenty of snow on the ground and the sun was shining. Everyone seemed to have lots of fun. The photo shows one group which

dispersed into two separate hunting parties at the onset of the event.

The adults (L-R): Blanka Joza, Ladia Joza, Hana Katzerova, Lisa Hyland, Doug Bauman and Lubomir Katzerova. The youth: Anthony Katzerova in back next to Hana; L-R in front: Matt Katzerova, Eric Hyland in orange, Adam Polakovsky



The party led by Lisa Hyland and consisting of the

remaining youngsters seen in the photo was in a mood for a quick brisk walk through the King Nature Reserve. They made it all the way to the end of the long and winding trail, yet had time to find many of the items on their list. The remaining portion of the group lagged behind and took their time applying their newly acquired expert identification to the various flora. Their guide was glad to help them out here and there with clarifications. Thanks to all who attended and to the many people who contributed to make this event a success. We hope to see everyone at the next scavenger hunt. Be sure to consult our web page to stay informed of any upcoming events which don't make it into the newsletter.

Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting of the Westmoreland Conservancy will be held April 27th at 7:30 pm in the Municipal Conference Room adjacent to the Library. It is very important that members be there to participate in the election of new Governors.

Annual Dinner

The [2005 Annual Dinner](#) will be held Sunday, May 22nd at The GrandView in Forest Hills. Check out this gorgeous restaurant at [PittsburghGolf.com](#). Directions, menu and reservation information are being made available via a separate insert in this issue of the newsletter. Our very own Dick Byers, author of the Conservancy Corner articles and book compilations, will be our guest speaker for this special evening.

Spring Migration Road Trip

It's that time of year again! Anyone interested in going up to Crane Creek May 21st please call Shelly Tichy at 724-325-5523. We'll decide whether to leave Friday evening or Saturday morning (at 3:30 am) when we see how many will attend. Crane Creek is an important location, as this is where the birds stop to rest and eat before a long, dangerous flight over the Great Lakes on their way North. You'll be amazed at the variety of birds to be seen here, so bring binoculars & cameras!

Biodiversity Contest

By Dick Byers

In this age of the Sixth Great Extinction we need to cultivate an appreciation of species and make people more ecologically aware of their surroundings, particularly of the common species with whom we share the planet. Many people have no idea what plants or animals live in their backyard, let alone what lives naturally in Pennsylvania. Certainly you cannot appreciate efforts to protect certain species from the environmental upheaval caused by man if you are unaware of the very existence of such wildlife. To

achieve more awareness of the biodiversity that surrounds us, the Westmoreland Conservancy is proposing a contest. This spring, summer and fall, we'd like you to count all the species that live in your backyard, both plant and animal, and turn them into the newsletter editor for comparison with others who live in your neighborhood. This would include anything you are able to identify – plants, insects, amphibians, mammals, etc. You may not be able to positively identify everything, but you can still count them. Earthworms, for example, are difficult to identify without professional help, but you can tell whether you have more than one species of earthworm. Nightcrawlers are easily distinguishable from the other species of earthworms by size alone.

People with 10 acres of land will have more species than someone who lives on a half acre, so the size of your property will also be required for a fair comparison. An estimate will suffice. This contest will not only be fun, it will bring some interesting surprises for you. Believe me, you will discover species you didn't know you had or perhaps never even knew existed. When I did this on my Murrysville property back in the 1960's I was astonished at what I found. I had 1.5 acres on Clawson Drive that runs off Meadowbrook Road. Unfortunately, that list is on a floppy from my first computer and no longer accessible.

Some field guides will be needed for your assessment. You probably know all the commercial plants you have bought and planted, but what about all those weeds? What birds nest there? What lives in your pond besides the goldfish you threw in? I'm going to include a field guide list in this article, but watch the Conservancy Corner column for a deeper treatment of field guides before you buy any. I hope to get to that article some time this spring. In the meantime, the Murrysville Library has some of the following field guides in their stacks.

[Some recommended guides:](#)

Newcomb's Wildflower Guide by Lawrence Newcomb

A Field Guide to Wildflowers by Roger Tory Peterson & Margaret McKinney

Birds of Eastern & Central North America by Roger Tory Peterson

Pennsylvania Amphibians and Reptiles by Larry L. Shaffer

The Tree Identification Book by George W. D. Symonds

The Shrub Identification Book by George W.D. Symonds

The Audubon Field Guide to N.A. Mushrooms

The Audubon Field Guide to Insects and Spiders

Butterflies through binoculars by Jeffrey Glassberg

That should cover most of what you do not know and they are all available in local book stores, the Internet, or the library. Some good shirt pocket ones I have, but did not mention, are out of print.

Make this a fun project. It will open your eyes; make you more observant and more ecological aware.

We hope a lot of our members will participate in this project. Who knows what kinds of creatures lurk in the untended nooks and crannies of your backyards? It may be wilder than you think. You can never tell until you look.

Editor's note

I have challenged our membership to share with us your experiences with and/or observations of nature. The following segments have been offered by some of our members:

MARGARET MURIE: GRANDMOTHER OF THE CONSERVATION MOVEMENT

1902-2003

By Jan Fitzpatrick

"I see them dancing, somewhere in the moonlight, somewhere in Alaska...." wrote John Denver in honor of his friend, Mardy Murie, then 93 years old and near the end of a career devoted to the preservation of wildlands, especially the Arctic Wildlife Range.

In the year of her graduation from the University of Alaska, Mardy married Olaus Murie who took her on a honeymoon expedition to study caribou in the Brooks Range of Alaska. That was 1924, when travel in the Alaska wilds meant weeks of primitive camping and hundreds of miles on the dogsled. Devoted to her husband and the important research he was doing for the U.S. Biological Survey, Mardy and their young children often accompanied Olaus on his treks into the wilderness.

In 1927, Olaus accepted an assignment to study elk in the rugged Wyoming mountains. The valley of Jackson Hole became their home for the rest of their lives.

From their log cabin in the shadows of the Teton Range, the couple worked tirelessly to promote legislation protecting wilderness areas from development. One of the first rewards for many years spent influencing legislators was the creation of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in 1960. Olaus died in 1963, just months before Congress passed The Wilderness Act which defines a wilderness and allows federal protection of these natural resources.

Joining the Governing Board of the Wilderness Society, Mardy continued to write and lobby for the preservation of Alaska's wildlands. In her testimony to Congress in 1977, Mardy challenged all Americans: "I hope the United States of America is not so rich that she can afford to let these wildernesses pass by, or so poor she cannot afford to keep them." The Alaska Lands Act, signed into law in 1980, enlarged the national park from 7 to 50 million acres and added another 110 million acres to the National Wildlife Refuge System and the National Wilderness Preservation System.

In 1998, at the age of 96, Margaret Murie was awarded the Medal of Freedom by President Clinton. Much of the success in preserving Alaska's wilderness can be attributed to the lifelong dedication of the Muries to the cause of conservation.

Their friends remember them dancing at every opportunity, for the love of each other and for their love of the land.

If you are interested in learning more about the Muries....

Murie, Margaret. Two in the Far North. 1962. Alaska Northwest Books, AK. ISBN:088240489X

Bryant, Jennifer and Castro, Antonio. Margaret Murie: A Wilderness Life. Twentyfirst Century Books, NY. 1993. ISBN:0805022201

Craighead, Charles and Kreps, Bonnie. Arctic Dance: The Mardy Murie Story.

Graphic Arts Center Publishing Co., OR. 2002 ISBN:1558686002

John Denver: A Song for All Lovers, from the Wildlife Concert (1995).

Torn Pages From My Journal

April 1, 2005 I found the following torn sheets of paper stuffed under the roots of the broad baobab tree in my library. These torn pages come from my journals from various years gone by; and were apparently absconded by an unnamed youngster in my acquaintance....

April 1, 1978 Today I took a trek to Townsend. There I found five hundred fragrant flowers. Buttercups and forget-me-nots arrayed beside a babbling brook. I view a valley filled with frolicking fawns.

April 1, 1984 Today I discovered a vast cave in the woods above my parents house. An extensive subterranean combination of chambers and tunnels lay before me. The first two rooms were typical of caves and otherwise unexceptional. As I traversed on my stomach through an extremely long and narrow passage, I could see some light emanating before me. At length I was able to again stand and turned a corner to view the most amazing and exquisite sight I have ever seen. A natural yet regular formation ... [end of page]

April 1, 1991 Today as I hiked in open woods beyond a rod and gun club, I view a small dwarf or so I thought, for he disappears. I follow the path I fear he might have taken. I chance upon an old foundation consisting mainly of stone. Now I hear a simple sweet tune wisping from behind the stone. I dart over the wall and drape my coat around a small wiggling form. The song becomes profanity unmentionable as I struggle to reveal my catch. A Leprechaun to be sure, all green in garb. He tells me he was here to fetch his black clay crock, all filled with gold. And then again he vanishes from my sight and hold. I see him yet again no more, that day or any other, but wonder if he has ever found that pot of gold.

April 1, 1999 As I wander through the woods with me, myself and I, I find a gentle sort of soul which promises not to sigh. But suddenly I see a shape that's dark with shadows here and there, it lumbers high and ducks down low when and whither wander I. Believing I have found a bear, I take a sideways step, on my guard and somewhat wary, continue on my journey. Finding nature now up a tree, I circle around to see what I can see. He pants and whiffs a waft of air all steamy hot to glare. He gives one look, and climbs no more, finding honey to consume. Suddenly he hops off the tree, gives chase and catches up by and by, so we wrestle for a while. I don't actually approve of that guy, treating me just so, so we part and meet again no more until another day.

Well the aspects of nature in our woods never fail to delight.

Happy April Fools Day!

Douglas A. Bauman

Westmoreland Conservancy

P.O. Box 446

Murrysville, PA 15668

contact@westmorelandconservancy.org

Schedule of Upcoming Events

Saturday, April 16th - Spring PA Cleanways 9 am Meeting spot: Tarr Hollow Rd at Old William Penn. Bring work gloves and sturdy shoes.

Wednesday, April 27th - Annual Meeting and Elections: 7:30 pm in the Municipal Conference Room adjacent to the Library. Please attend to elect our 2005 Governors & Officers.

Saturday, May 21st - Spring Migration Road Trip to Crane Creek near Sandusky, Ohio.

Sunday, May 22nd - Annual Dinner at The GrandView of Forest Hills (PittsburghGolf.com) Details enclosed in accompanying insert. Speaker: Dick Byers

2004 Board of Governors/Officers

Officers: President - Mount Fitzpatrick

Vice President - Katie Blackmore

Secretary - Shelly Tichy

Treasurer - Cindy McCormick

Governors: Dick Byers, Doug Bauman, Charlie Conway, Theo van de Venne, Don Harrison, Richard Wagner, Joanna Franz

The meetings are open, and we look forward to seeing you there. Meetings are held the 4th Wednesday of each month at the Murrysville Library at 7:30 pm.

April 27th

May 25th

June 22nd

The next Newsletter is scheduled for July 1st.

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Westmoreland Conservancy

An all volunteer, non-profit, 501c-3 Corporation dedicated to
acquiring and preserving rural and rustic lands for the public good.

Westmoreland Conservancy

Membership Application

P.O. Box 446

Murrysville, PA 15668

Membership Levels

Individual.....\$10.00

Family.....15.00

Business membership.....40.00

Additional Donation.....\$_____

Name_____

Address_____

City_____

State _____ Zip Code_____

e-mail_____

For your convenience, you may also renew your membership or give

donations through our website at www.westmorelandconservancy.org

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