



WESTMORELAND CONSERVANCY NEWSLETTER

www.westmorelandconservancy.org

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

PA Cleanways Fall Effort

The Westmoreland Conservancy held its semi-annual clean up of Old William Penn Hwy on Saturday, November 6th. This group looks ready to make the difference! Our organization cleans up the span of Old William Penn Hwy from the Cozy Inn Cut-off to the Murrysville Dry Cleaner each Spring and Fall.



Pictured, left to right, back row: Theo van de Venne, Don Harrison, Mount Fitzpatrick, Jan Fitzpatrick, Hank Kendall, Doug Siler. Front row: Joanna Franz, Chris Franz, Noreen Ignelzi, Joanne Kendall and Cary Bohl.

The Conservancy Corner Collection



The second edition of Dick Byers' [Conservancy Corner Collection](#) is being compiled and will soon be available through some local merchants. Those merchants will be listed on our website and in our April newsletter. Volume 1 has been updated itself, and now has a new companion: Volume 2. You will be able to purchase both volumes on our [website](#).

Conservancy Scavenger Hunt

Saturday, February 26th The Westmoreland Conservancy will be hosting a **Scavenger Hunt** at the King Nature Reserve and Potter's Corner on Crowfoot Road in Murrysville. **This will be a lot of fun!** Multiple groups can travel the trails in search of a predefined list of 'nature' items. This can be anything from types of trees, leaves and acorns to bridges, benches and signs. Some items we will request you collect and bring back with you. Other items we will ask you to photograph with a digital camera or simply provide a description of its location to your guide.

On the day of the event a '[clue-sheet](#)' with photos will be available to those who request them. Otherwise a simple [text](#) list of items will be provided. We ask that you call or email us ahead of time to reserve a spot for yourself or your group. There is no limit to the number of participants, but we would like to have an idea in advance of the number and size of groups. If you come alone we will form groups for you. Groups can request to have a guide accompany them if so desired.

The public is invited to join us at the Sloan Elementary School parking lot (at the soccer field entrance off of Crowfoot Road) on February 26th beginning at 9 am. The event may last as long as the participants desire. You can find all your items right away or take your time with a leisurely stroll. There will be surprise bonus points and questions tallied at the end of the event so keep a keen eye peeled even for things not on your list! In the event of a tie the team with the fastest completion time will determine the winners. Call 724-325-5523 to reserve a spot or email us at: contact@westmorelandconservancy.org

Another Completed Eagle Scout Project

Dick Byers

Tim Forrester, working toward the rank of Eagle Scout, has achieved what the Conservancy has been wanting for several years: the addition of fenced-in areas on the reserves to observe the effect of deer browsing. Tim completed the last of four deer exclosures on three WC Reserves. Working with Dr. Walter Carson, who was the speaker at our spring banquet, Tim selected three sites encompassing three different habitats. Two are in the meadow of the McGinnis Reserve. One is along the path leading from the power line on the King Reserve northward toward the pipeline trail. It is on the right hand side of the trail and is in dry upland regenerating woods. The fourth is near the bridge over Pearson Creek (another Eagle Scout project) on the Potter Addition in low moist bottomland forest. The exclosures are about 15 X 30 feet in size and seven feet tall consisting of a plastic mesh stapled to landscape timbers. In addition to these four exclosures, an open area of equal size was staked out as a control area. Vegetation inside both the exclosure and control area was surveyed by the scouts and recorded. The job was very professionally done. We really got our money's worth.

These exclosures, in a few years time, should tell us just how much impact deer are having on the conservancy properties while also educating the general public on the damage an over sized deer herd can exert on the forest. The exclosures are too small to give us a good picture of how the biodiversity will be affected. Much larger exclosures would be needed for that at considerably more expense, but we might be surprised at what pops up inside these small exclosures. Time will tell. This was a worthwhile and very time consuming project for Tim. His Eagle Scout project required 100 hours of labor and he went way over the mark.

Tom Pearson led a winter tree identification walk for the Westmoreland Bird & Nature Club on the Potter addition over Thanksgiving weekend. None of the participants were from Murrysville and all were very impressed with both the deer exclosure and the bridge the scouts built over Pearson Creek. We are certainly fortunate to have such dedicated boy scouts in the community. It is hoped you will all find time to get out on our trails to see the results of their labor.

Rachel Carson, 1907-1964 Environmentalist and Neighbor

How often, when criticism is voiced against an accepted practice, do we shoot the messenger and ignore the message? Such was the case in 1962, when Rachael Carson endured attacks from those who were profiting from the production and use of poisonous chemical sprays, including the notorious DDT. Her book, *Silent Spring*, was published at a time when the terms 'conservation' and 'environment' were not in the vocabulary of politicians. Industrialists labeled Carson an hysteric and extremist. Yet her book, and others listed below, launched the modern environmental movement. The eagle and peregrine falcon have been saved from extinction, and countless human lives have been spared as the result of the ban on the use of DDT. We thank Rachel Carson for raising our public consciousness to the environmental hazards of the use of pesticides. We must insist that the Federal regulatory groups established to protect us from the poisoning of the food chain perform their mandates.

How can I get involved?

Read books by Rachel Carson: *The Sea Around Us*, 1951; *The Edge of the Sea*, 1955; *Silent Spring*, 1962; *The Sense of Wonder*, 1965.

Visit the [Rachel Carson Homestead](#) in Springdale, PA. Between October and March, the Homestead is open by appointment only. Call 724:274-5459 for hours and fees.

Educate your children. Parents of children ages 8-12 may be interested in the Science on Saturday programs, monthly explorations of topics from nature. Call 724:274-5459.

Contact Pennsylvania State and U.S. Congress and Senate Representatives when issues arise which you feel are threatening your or the environment's well-being.

And...Run or walk the Rachel Carson Trail Challenge in June. If you are interested in a day of brutal hiking, try the 34 mile long R.C.T. Challenge, beginning at daybreak in North Park and ending by sunset in the Harrison Hills County Park. Check the website: www.rachelcarsontrail.com/challenge

The Natural Yard

Has anyone ever noticed the tendency for lawns to look as though they're part of a golf course? There is an overwhelming trend to display large tracts of sterile, manicured grass. Remember the old Bee Hive hairdo? The hair was pulled, teased and shellacked into a high-rise helmet. (Women got away from the style in favor of a more natural look.) Today's lawns undergo much the same procedure: fertilizer, pesticides, weed control, mow, water, re-fertilize, mow, more weed control, etc. An expensive cycle. And keep children and pets off the lawn until the chemicals dissipate. Those same chemicals that poison the insects poison the birds that eat the insects **and** can seep into the ground water.

There **ARE** alternatives.

The book *Redesigning the American Lawn: A Search for Environmental Harmony* by F. Herbert Bormann, Diana Balmori and Gordon T. Geballe has had a second edition printed by Yale University Press. It's about your lawn and creating a healthy environment for your family and the community. *The Wild Lawn Handbook* by Stevie Daniels addresses the topic similarly.

In an article by Joe Reynolds from the Atlantic Highlands Herald the topic of lawn care undergoes some serious scrutiny. His research determines that the manicured lawn is susceptible to drought, and can cost as much as \$400.00 per half-acre to maintain per year. He cites an example from the book where the town of Milford, CT adopted the concept of the "Freedom Lawn" in response to the anti-pollution and ecological awareness activities of Earth Day. The town holds a competition, looking for chemical-free lawns with native plantings, bird and animal habitat and even gravel driveways (which allow rainwater to sink into the ground rather than run off into the street). These "freedom Lawns" are low maintenance, more resistant to drought, promote biological diversity and are much more interesting for young and old alike.

Joe wraps up his article by challenging his readers to "be bold, be different, and stop being like ...residents that have helped to contribute to 31 million acres of lawn in the United States..... Birds, butterflies, native plants and our local waterways will thank you!" This is an interesting challenge, and one that should be explored locally as well. You can send photos of your Natural Lawn to newsletter@westmorelandconservancy.org to be featured in our newsletter, or to contact@westmorelandconservancy.org to be added to our website photos.

To read Joe Reynolds's entire article, go to http://ahherald.com/oaktrail/2002/oot020509_lawn.htm .

Lunar Eclipse: October 27, 2004



Following the October meeting of the Westmoreland Conservancy Wednesday, October 27th, several members were prepared with telescopes and cameras (gloves and scarves, too!) to watch the lunar eclipse. What a sight! We watched as the shadow progressed and saw the moon turn red! We took turns looking through the different telescopes and cameras, checking each other to see who had the best shots. [...click here for a photo taken of the eclipse through a telescope...](#)

Photo Shoot Outings



Within the Westmoreland Conservancy there is a band of intrepid photographers, eager to crawl over hill and dale in search of interesting things to capture on film (or in Doug's case, a memory card!). We enjoyed two such excursions in October. The first was a trip to [Linn Run](#) on Friday, October 8th. Doug has put a very nice account of this trip on the website, along with an assortment of [photographs](#) from each of the participants. The second was to [Roaring Run](#) in Apollo on Tuesday, October 26th. Obviously, both outings were timed to coincide with the fall foliage, which put on a show before and after the "peak" color period.



Our core group consists of: Doug Bauman, Cary Bohl, Richard Wagner and Shelly Tichy. If you would be interested in joining us for one of our adventures, feel free to e-mail us at: contact@westmorelandconservancy.org. We have walked various reserves in all seasons, taking pictures of tracks in the snow, nests being built, various babies as they emerge to explore their world. We've gone as far as Crane Creek near Sandusky, Ohio for the spring bird migration. We welcome new ideas!

Westmoreland Conservancy
P.O. Box 446
Murrysville, PA 15668
contact@westmorelandconservancy.org

Schedule of Upcoming Events

Saturday, February 26th : Scavenger Hunt, 9am, King Reserve: Call (724) 325-5523 to join a team.

Wednesday, April 27th: Annual Meeting

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.

January 26th
February 23rd
March 23rd

A reminder that our April 27th meeting is our Annual meeting to vote for Officers and Governors for the 2005 fiscal year.

The next Newsletter is scheduled for April 1st 2005.

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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