



WESTMORELAND CONSERVANCY NEWSLETTER

www.westmorelandconservancy.org

July 2007 Editor: Shelly Tichy (724) 325-5523 newsletter@westmorelandconservancy.org

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2007 Annual Meeting

The Annual Members Meeting and Elections of the Westmoreland Conservancy was held **April 25th at 7:30 pm** in the Municipal Conference Room adjacent to the Library. Mount Fitzpatrick, Shelly Tichy and Richard Wagner had all served the maximum 6 years as Governors and therefore stepped down. With other vacancies, there were several openings to fill. Members elected Betsy Aiken, Katie Blackmore, Charles Conway and Maury Hanes. Following the election of Governors, Officers were nominated and elected. The 2007 Officers are: Mark Emerson, President; Betsy Aiken, Vice President; Joanne Kendall, Secretary and Bjoerg Granger, Treasurer. Thank you to those attending.

Spring Migration Road Trip

The Spring Migration trip to Crane Creek on Saturday, May 12 was memorable! There were a couple of new faces this year as Cary Bohl and Louise Burkey joined Richard Wagner and myself at 3 AM Saturday morning. With a couple of stops along the way we made it to Crane Creek around 8 AM. There were also hundreds of birders from all over. Known as one of the premier birdwatching areas in the country, it is not unusual to see dozens of species in the course of a day. Swallows delight the eye all summer long, while ducks, geese, coots and egrets are easily sighted in their natural habitat. This female woodcock was a great find, as these birds are usually very reclusive.

There was a Raptor Rescue tent set up at the Visitor's Center, with many rescued birds on display. All donations are used for the rehabilitation of sick and/or injured raptors, from the smallest Kestrel to the larger eagles and owls. The vast majority are returned to the wild, but those that cannot survive in their natural habitat are trained as educational ambassadors.

On the way home we stopped in Akron to see the goings-on at a blue heron rookery. In an area as large as 2 city-blocks there were in excess of 150 active nests. What a sight! The babies were visible and we were able to observe the little ritual between the adults as one would bring in food and get permission from the guardian adult to enter the nest. What a great day!

Members' Picnic

The Westmoreland Conservancy has scheduled a picnic for our members and their families for **Saturday, August 18th, 3 PM – 7 PM. At Pedora Park** (Old William Penn Hwy at Wilson Rd, Export). There is a playground for children's activities, so bring the family! We'll have a pot-luck style picnic in the pavilion, which has electricity for anyone using a crock pot or the like. Please contact Lisa Hyland at 724-387-1321 before August 13th to tell her what you're bringing and how many will attend. Looking forward to a great time!

Annual Rotary Outing at King Reserve

by Mark Emerson

Wednesday, May 30 marked the annual work detail of the Murrysville-Export Rotary Club on the King Reserve off Crowfoot Road. Actually the work parties entered the Reserve from the home of Ben Getty, who hosted a Rotary Club picnic later in the evening. The Reserve has often been described as Ben's backyard, and for good reason. Less than a hundred yards behind his home the trail rises up from Crowfoot and continues to its far end.

The Rotarians performed several much-needed tasks. As was done last year one group tackled large patches of multi-flora rose. Included in the team was Bob Neff and his rear deck mounted mower that made it well into the Reserve to get some cutting done. He was joined by Chuck Turner and Tony Pauly in removing much unwanted vegetation from the trails.

At the opposite end of the Reserve Nick Dorsch and Wade Gibbs cleared the Reserve trail of several large (~3 ft. caliper) trees that had blocked the trail near Crowfoot. Until then folks had to crawl under or climb over the trees. Also joining those members on work details, or just for a hike in the woods, were Jim Stange, Ann Pauly, and Natalie Matta.

Conservancy members Richard Wagner, Maury Haynes, and Mark Emerson joined in by starting the repair of the deer enclosure just off the trail, and not too far from the Getty's.

Ben Getty and his wife Sylvia hosted the picnic after an hour or two was spent on the trail. A number of other Rotary members joined in at that point.

The Conservancy would like to thank all of the Rotarians once again for their work on the Reserve and we look forward to joining them next year on another outing.

Park Chat Walks Popular

Summer Event

by Mount Fitzpatrick

Among the things that make Murrysville such a great place to live and work are our parks and nature reserves. Throughout the spring and summer, Murrysville Recreation and the Westmoreland Conservancy host monthly morning Park Chat Walks. These casual walks provide a fine introduction to many of our parks and reserves. Those already familiar with the walks know them as an opportunity for further exploration while having fun and enjoying good company and conversation.

On a perfectly crisp and clear morning of June 20th, 14 walkers met at Pleasant Valley Park. Each of Murrysville's parks is distinctly different, and PV Park is becoming a destination of choice for mountain bikers, hikers, and – in the winter – cross-country skiers. A group of hardworking volunteers has been building an impressive series of mountain-biking and hiking trails to complement the park's old farm roads and fields that were favored last winter by cross-country skiers.

Participants in the PV Park Chat Walk explored many of the new trails, admired the sturdy bridges recently built by volunteers, took in beautiful scenery (including a farm pond and a bog), sampled blackberries and raspberries, and speculated about the sources of a variety of fresh pawprints.

Mystery pawprint observed at PV Park

The remaining Park Chat Walks for the year:

July 18 McGinnis Nature Reserve

August 15 Bear Hollow Trail (meet in parking lot of Royal Highlands Field)

September 19 Walter Nature Reserve

October 17 Murrysville Community Park (meet in Athletic Field Parking Lot)

The walks start at 8:30, rain or shine. They are free, and no registration is required (although an RSVP to 724 327-2100 X115 is helpful). Directions to the parks may be found at www.murrysville.gov, and to the nature reserves at www.westmorelandconservancy.org.

More Activities for Your Calendar

Kellman/Skena Farm property walk: The 22-acre Skena Farm adjoining the Kellman Reserve faces an uncertain future. It could become 38 duplexes or a valuable addition to the Lillian Kellman Nature Reserve. It contains the entire Kellman stream watershed and a half-acre educational pond. Clarence Skena is inviting all members of the Westmoreland Conservancy to walk the property to explain the benefits of preserving it naturally. Meet Clarence (724-327-3656) at 1:30 PM Sunday July 29 at 3561 North Hills Road. Look for balloons attached to the mailbox. We hope to see many of you there.

The **2007 Murrysville Community Day** will be held **Saturday, August 26th** at the **Municipal Complex** on Sardis Road.

A Question From the Editor:

What's Important to You?

I have often invited members to participate in the making of this newsletter by submitting either stories or photos. I am extending that invitation again because we want to know what is important to you. Remember that the Westmoreland Conservancy exists because we share interests. Let us know if you know of a property available for consideration. Likewise, we enjoy sharing experiences and photos. Contact me by any means convenient: website, email, smoke signal or phone.

– Shelly Tichy

2007 Board of Governors/Officers

Officers: President – Mark Emerson

Vice President – Betsy Aiken

Secretary – Joanne Kendall

Treasurer - Bjoerg Granger

Governors: Dick Byers, Doug Bauman, Cary Bohl, Katie Blackmore, Lisa Hyland, Charles Conway, Maury Hanes

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.

July 25th

August 22nd

September 26th



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

P.O. Box 446

Murrysville, PA 15668

contact@westmorelandconservancy.org



Schedule of Upcoming Events

Wednesday, July 18th: 8:30 AM: Park Chat Walk, McGinnis reserve walk, rain or shine

Wednesday, July 25th: 7:30 PM Monthly Meeting

Sunday, July 29th: 1:30 PM Kellman/Skena Farm property walk

Wednesday, August 15th, 8:30 AM Park Chat Walk, Bear Hollow Trail (meet in parking lot of Royal Highlands Field)

MOVED TO THE FALL! TBD., Members' Picnic.

Wednesday, August 22nd: 7:30 PM Monthly Meeting

Saturday, August 25th: Murrysville Community Day, Municipal Complex on Sardis Road

Wednesday, September 19th, 8:30 AM Park Chat Walk, Walter Reserve, rain or shine

Wednesday, September 26th: 7:30 PM Monthly Meeting

Wednesday, October 17th: 8:30 AM Park Chat Walk, Murrysville Community Park (meet in Athletic Field Parking Lot)



Westmoreland Conservancy

Membership Application

P.O. Box 446

Murrysville, PA 15668

Membership Levels

Individual.....\$15.00

Family.....20.00

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



The next Newsletter is scheduled for **October 2007**.

Eco-Fun Page

Toad Abodes

Toad Houses really DO work! It's also true that not everyone finds toads beautiful. However, a single toad can eat about 110 beetles, ants, June bugs, grasshoppers, slugs, moths, mosquitoes and other bugs every day. That's around 3,300 every month! Toads are most active at night, so during the day they need a fairly dark, cool place to hide from the sun and predators. Encourage these beneficial eating-machines to have a nice long stay in your garden by providing toad abodes! Place in a moist, shady area in your garden and before long you'll have a new neighbor.

You will need: one 4" or 6" terra cotta pot per toad abode.

Outdoor paints (weather resistant)

The pots can be chipped or cracked on one side, as the pots will be pushed into the soil and a layer of dirt put in to level the interior.

Paint your pot so that the large opening is the abode's front door, like the opening of a cave. It can be painted with flowers or bugs or whatever looks homey to a toad! After the paint has dried for a day or two, find a nice shady area of the garden. **Make sure that the area HAS NOT been sprayed with any insecticides.** Scoop away enough soil for the pot to lie in without rolling away. Once the pot is positioned the way you want it, push the extra dirt in to make the floor of the Toad Abode. Now, gently introduce a toad into the area. Your flowers and vegetables will thank you for the added protection.

Reptiles & Amphibians in Western PA

L T R R J H Y B R Q U E E N S N A K E L K H K K S X
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N Z T Y G N C C B S N K T N L Y H L O H T K D X G L
P Y W Q B A Q N C K H D I L C B L Q N G H N J X M H
G Q M R D K N E M I M A D J M C L G O R F D O O W H
X K R L R E N F L N P M D J C G O R F D R A P O E L
V J K Y V F K Y T K G A R T E R S N A K E R Q Z J J

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| American Toad | Garter snake | Queen snake |
| Black rat snake | Green frog | Ring necked snake |
| Box turtle | Hellbender | Slimy salamander |
| Bull frog | Jefferson | Snapping turtle |
| Coal skink | Leopard frog | Spiny softshell |
| Copperhead | Milk snake | Spotted salamander |
| Dusky | Mudpuppy | Spring peepers |
| Eastern newt | Northern watersnake | Timber rattlesnake |
| Fence lizard | Painted turtle | Wood frog |
| Five lined skink | Pickerel frog | |