



WESTMORELAND CONSERVANCY NEWSLETTER

www.westmorelandconservancy.org

October 2004 Editor: Shelly Tichy (724) 325-5523 newsletter@westmorelandconservancy.org

Community Days 2004

The Westmoreland Conservancy participated in two community celebrations this year. The first was the Fort Hand Festival in Washington Township on Saturday, September 11. Mount Fitzpatrick, Katie Blackmore and Doug Bauman of the Westmoreland Conservancy attended a booth at the Fort Hand Festival at Kunkle Park, Washington Township on Saturday, Sept. 11th. Many people stopped by the large tent to see our display, purchasing drawings, shirts, and the "Conservancy Corner Collections" book by Dick Byers. John Turack, a Washington Township council member, helped us get the booth/tent and introduced us



to U.S. Congressman Tim Murphy, who happened to be at the festival that day. We passed out many fliers with information about the Conservancy as well as newsletters and membership forms.



Murrysville Community Day 2004 was held Saturday, September 18th, at the Murrysville Municipal Complex on Sardis Road. The weather was beautiful and clear, and being held in the Public Works area protected the larger booths and displays such as ours. Plumline Nursery again loaned us trees and ferns to give our booth a warm, natural flavor. Frank Peters, "The Reptile Guy", was present with his traveling menagerie. Frank brought rat snakes, boa constrictors, an alligator snapping turtle, a beaded lizard, a copperhead and a Black Widow spider. Allowing the non-poisonous snakes to climb up and sun themselves in a small oak tree both fascinated and delighted onlookers.

The Vernon Bachelder Hometown Photo Show

The Vernon Bachelder Hometown Photo Show was held during the Murrysville Community Day September 18th. The public voted for their favorite pictures. The intent of this show was to celebrate what is unique and special within our



hometown. It was named after Vernon Bachelder, who was a dear friend of the Westmoreland Conservancy and who encouraged others to try photography for the pure enjoyment of it. He also used photography as a tool for recording and sharing the beauty he found everywhere in nature. His images of nature are reminders of what is worth preserving in a community. The images in the show at Community Day likewise reflected this theme.

The votes were tallied at 3 PM with the results announced from the Grandstand stage. A special thanks to those photographers who contributed prints for the show. All were great and deserving of special credit as examples of snapshots of life in our community with their sense of beauty and wonder. The photos were divided into the Nature/Wildlife/Gardens or the Community/Family/Pets/ Sports categories, and were awarded 1st, 2nd or 3rd Peoples' Choice. Those choices were:

Community/Family/Pets/Sports category

- 1st - Truby Buccille *"Honest Mom, they just followed us home. Please can we keep them?"*
 2nd - Joan Kearns (untitled) *Young boy, spoon trick*
 3rd - Jorge Valdes *"Murrysville Cycling Classic, Pro/elite race"*



Nature, Wildlife and Gardens category

- 1st - Dorothy Benevento *"Peaceful Awakening"*
 2nd - Mark McConaughy *"Red Fox"*
 3rd - Dev Bucciero *"I See You"*

Thank you to all who visited the Westmoreland Conservancy exhibit to view the photos, find out about the activities of the Conservancy, and to take an up close and personal view of the reptiles of Frank Peters. And thank you to Katie Blackmore, who chaired the committee this year.



Summer Picnic

Saturday, August 21st started out looking gray and threatening, but it shaped up into a beautiful day! It was our annual Picnic with the Conservancy at Townsend Park, and the day did not disappoint. While the Pot Luck-style meal was set up and the tables prepared there was a game of croquet being enjoyed above the lower parking area. Then we had good food around the table and lots of lively conversation while we did some serious eating.



After lunch we all got a lesson in Bocce from Fiore Benevento and got down to some pretty intense competition. Green Team won game 1 and Red Team took game 2.

Good games work up good appetites, so we settled in to share desserts and coffee before wrapping it up around 5 PM.



Eagle Scout Progress Report:

Deer Exclosure Pens

Tim Forrester of Boy Scout Troop 208 is working on several deer exclosure pens on the King, Potter, and McGinnis Reserves for his Eagle Scout project. For those of you who don't know what a deer exclosure is, they consist, in this case, of a fenced area 15 by 30 feet designed to keep deer out. It is an educational project to show the public the effect of browsing from an over-sized deer herd. It will also give us a vivid idea of just what effect the deer are having on the habitat of our reserves.

The heavy labor phase has been completed. The landscape timbers, planted at least 2 feet deep, which will support the fencing, are in place. The scouts had to go through almost solid rock at one site on the McGinnis Reserve. When the netting is erected and staked down the project will be complete. The scouts have also staked out an area beside each exclosure for a control area. The plants in both the fenced and open areas have been identified as a basis of comparison later.

There are two exclosures on the King Reserve, one on the Potter addition and the other along the trail past the power line on the right side. Anyone walking the main trail on King cannot miss it. The other two are in the field at the north end of the McGinnis Reserve, so the exclosures are in three different habitats. They will be closely monitored over the next few years. If we put them in the right places, we should



see some significant differences between the inside and outside areas of the enclosures.

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:

In The Sky



On September 19th, after several pleasant hours of sailing on Lake Arthur in Moraine State Park; my wife Alice and I decided to visit the waterfowl viewing area at the end of the Big Run arm of the lake. The viewing deck was underwater as were the docks in the marina. We noticed two ospreys circling over the cove. I often see hawks circling over our home and hoped to someday see one dive for a prey. While we watched, the two ospreys made about eight dives. Only once was a fish captured, which was clearly visible in the osprey's talons as it flew off toward the trees. The

other osprey was still circling and looking down when we left. Several things I found particularly interesting. While circling and when the osprey sees what might be a meal, it sort of hovers looking down while doing a lot of wing flapping. The osprey is a big hawk and when it hits the water on what seemed like a vertical dive, it creates quite a splash. After a dive and starting to gain altitude, the osprey while flying would shake itself like a wet dog. Since the osprey was usually between us and the late afternoon sun, we saw a halo of spray as the osprey shook the water off. It was a memorable experience. I had a camera but was so fascinated by the action I didn't try to get a photograph.

Ed Straub

In the Neighborhood

This small red squirrel had a body length of about 6 inches and a corresponding weight of less than ½ pound. Humans are considerably larger and have far greater mental powers to diffuse any situation.



When the doorbell rang our fearless leader (Mount) took immediate command of the situation after being informed by the neighbor lady that "a chipmunk is acting strangely. He's chasing my children!" Stocking feet notwithstanding, a Wild West-type confrontation immediately ensued. The squirrel advanced. Mount advanced, feet stomping and hands clapping. The squirrel's advance slowed but did not stop. Mount stopped. Mount retreated amid peals of laughter from the surrounding children. Dignity was restored only after the squirrel was tricked into crossing the road into another neighbor's yard and a final admonition of "You should probably keep the children indoors for an hour or so."

Mount no longer live-traps chipmunks or red squirrels, as this being "too hazardous an occupation!"

Mount Fitzpatrick

September Night Sky

Governors of the Westmoreland Conservancy decided to do a little star gazing after the regular monthly meeting on Sept. 22 using a telescope recently acquired by Doug Bauman. While viewing the moon, stars of Cassiopeia, and other wonders of the night sky, Doug noticed a star in the north east sky shimmering green and red. At first all thought this object to be a plane or helicopter, but after viewing for a while through the telescope it was realized that it never moved. Bizarre scenarios danced through their heads, was it a UFO? The next day, research on the internet proved that it was the star Capella, a bright star at low altitude which often puts on this display in late September. Here is a poem written by Doug describing the encounter:

Oh, what wonders I observed last night,
 Were shining on high with no competition.
 A star so beautiful and ever so bright,
 Colorful and spinning with much revolution.
 Pulsing red then green then blue then white,
 in momentary flashes I have never before seen.
 Reaching out with a telescope to behold a pure sight,
 Even in that manner, it remained red and green.
 Steadfast and radiant, and pinned to one place,
 neither helicopter, nor plane, nor man made device.
 Trumpeting news of this breathtaking discovery,
 Might bring fervent tenacity to fortunate advice.
 Behold what wonders I observed last night,
 With awe and adoration as perceived just then,
 A legend is formed by this hued starlight
 That hopes never dashed will return once again.



Doug Bauman

How many of our members noticed the Kingfisher residing along Sardis Road across from the Municipal Building this summer? I'd like to hear from you.

newsletter@westmorelandconservancy.org ST

Westmoreland Conservancy

P.O. Box 446

Murrysville, PA 15668

contact@westmorelandconservancy.org



Schedule of Upcoming Events

* **Park Chat Walks: Call (724) 327-2100 to reserve a spot. Meet at Park or Reserve lot at 8:30 AM.**

October 20 *Murrysville Community Park and Walter Nature Reserve Park Chat Walk

9 AM, November 6 – PA Cleanways Old Wm Penn Hwy Clean Up. Meet at Tarr Hollow at Old Wm. Penn. Bring work gloves and wear sturdy shoes.

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.

October 27th

November 17th**

December 29th**

**** Note that these dates are NOT the 4th Wednesday. These date were rescheduled due to interference with Holiday schedules.**

The next Newsletter is scheduled for **January 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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