



Fall 2006

VOLUME 49, NUMBER 3

WVWA's Mission is to protect the quality and the beauty of the Wissahickon Creek and to enhance life in the watershed by:

Protecting and enhancing open space.



Promoting awareness of environmental issues through education.



Promoting wise land use..



Preserving historic sites important to the history of the Wissahickon.

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WVWA Welcomes Randy Gray As New Executive Director



The Board of Directors is pleased to announce that the new executive director of the Wissahickon Valley Watershed Association is P. Randolph Gray. Randy was formerly the Director of The Nature Conservancy in Pennsylvania, and has been involved with conservation issues for many years. He and his wife, Jane, are long-time members of the Watershed Association, and Randy served on the Board of Directors in 2005 and 2006.

Board Chairman John Shober commented, "I am really very

happy that our new leader is someone who is familiar with our history and our mission, and who has years of experience in land preservation. We are really fortunate that Randy is available to help us advance to the next level in all of our programs."

Randy's first few weeks on the job were marked by the challenges of downed trees and dead fish, but also by generous gifts from the Stratton Foundation and REI that will help us carry out an extensive project to increase the visibility of and access to our preserves and trails.

We are delighted to welcome Randy to the staff, and we invite you to stop in and welcome him.

Limited-Time-Only: Tax-Free Gifts From IRAs

A federal law enacted in mid-August allows IRA owners who are at least 70-1/2 years old to make direct charitable transfers to charity up to \$100,000 per year, without paying income taxes.

Previously, people who wanted to use their Roth or traditional IRAs had to pay tax on the amount withdrawn from the IRA and donated to charity. That is no longer the case.

This law is valid for the remainder of 2006 and through 2007, but will expire at the end of 2007 unless Congress extends it.

If you are interested in using your IRA as a source of a gift to the Wissahickon Valley Watershed Association, now is the time to do it! Please call Donna Middleton, Director of Development, at 215-646-8866 Ext. 16 for more information.

A Letter From the Executive Director

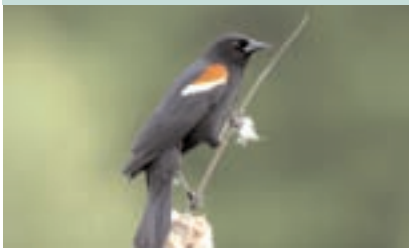
It is my great pleasure to write to you as the new executive director of the Wissahickon Valley Watershed Association. It is an honor to follow David Froehlich, our executive director for the past 30 years. What he and the Association have accomplished is truly remarkable.

From Penllyn Natural Area, our first preserve, to the land protection currently underway, we have protected in excess of 1,000 acres through outright acquisition or conservation easements. We all enjoy a beautiful Watershed, attributable, in many ways, to the Association.

The Association will celebrate its 50th Anniversary in 2007. Our challenge now is to position the Association to take advantage of our strengths and successes from the past to build for the future. The Board of Directors will initiate a strategic planning process this fall to solidify our vision of being the catalytic conservation organization in the Watershed. This will culminate with a renovation of the Barn to make it efficient for our uses and an inviting facility for members, staff and the community.

I come to the Association following a lengthy career in both finance and conservation, the latter with The Nature Conservancy here in Pennsylvania. I look forward to getting to know each of you and I hope you will visit us at the Barn and continue to join with us in our efforts to preserve all that is special about the Wissahickon.

-Randy Gray 1





Water Quality Matters

By Judith Gratz, Director of Environmental Education and Dennis Pennington, Water Quality Manager

Spills on the Wissahickon Creek and a fish kill in the Wissahickon Waterfowl Preserve were in the news during the summer. The Watershed Association followed appropriate procedures in each case and, we are happy to say, no permanent damage was done to the water quality of either the Creek or the Waterfowl Preserve. The first incident on June 15 was an accidental chemical spill from Merck in West Point. When the spilled chemical mixed with chlorine from the Upper Gwynedd wastewater treatment plant, it caused a fish kill downstream from the plant's outflow near Swedesford Road.

The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) was contacted to survey and analyze the situation. The DEP is the regulatory body that is responsible for dealing with water quality and the enforcement of state environmental laws.

WVWA staff posted notices at Four Mills Nature Reserve telling people to stay out of the Creek and to keep their animals out of the Creek. Summer campers at WVWA and other institutions downstream were kept out of the Creek until the all clear was given by DEP in July. WVWA staff kept in daily contact with DEP officials for updates on the situation.

The second spill came from the Ambler wastewater treatment plant on June 19. This was a biological spill of 55,000 gallons of raw sewage caused by a power failure and

the failure of a back up generator. The treatment plant operators reported the problem to the DEP and the public was notified by that agency through news releases.

Several days of rain beginning on June 22 moved the contaminated water downstream and diluted it.

More details about the spills are available at the Newsroom section of the DEP website, www.dep.state.pa.us.

The third event was a major fish kill in the reservoir of the new Wissahickon Waterfowl Preserve. In this case, the weather was to blame. With temperatures above 90° for over ten days, the shallow water in the reservoir heated up quickly and held the heat, a condition that drives out dissolved oxygen. Even low-oxygen-tolerant carp could not survive this low level of dissolved oxygen, which was measured at less than 1.5 parts per million. Warm water fish such as carp and sunfish can tolerate oxygen levels as low as 2 ppm. Cold water fish like trout require dissolved oxygen of at least 5 ppm.

Neighbors of the preserve contacted WVWA at midday August 7, when they noticed something just didn't smell right. Bob Adams, WVWA Director of Stewardship, went to the scene immediately, and called the DEP when he saw the large number of dead fish.

WVWA's water quality manager, Dennis Pennington, was called in to test the water

for dissolved oxygen and specific conductivity (an indirect indicator of contamination). The DEP sent field workers who also tested the water. Results of these tests showed low dissolved oxygen levels and no indication of a chemical spill.

The DEP said that it would be acceptable to them if the fish were left there in the reservoir. Out of consideration for our neighbors, however, we did not choose that option. Within 48 hours the Watershed Association had hired a clean-up contractor and the dead fish were removed and properly disposed of.

No sooner were the fish cleaned up than we learned of yet another discharge from Merck, this one non-toxic. Len Perrone, Upper Gwynedd Township Manager, came to Four Mills Barn on August 10 to inform us that Merck had released a larger-than-usual amount of proteins from the vaccine manufacturing process into the waste system, which was causing "foam" in the Creek. DEP was already involved in the matter, and, since there was no toxin involved, access to the Creek was not restricted.

WVWA's role in incidents such as these is to pass on to the public factual information as we know and understand it. The responsibility and the authority to enforce state laws and take regulatory action rest with DEP. Citizens of the watershed can call the local office of the DEP directly to report any environmental emergency or to get information regarding an on-going event: 484- 250-5900.

ORPHANED OR INJURED WILDLIFE

The WVWA is not licensed to accept, rehabilitate or transport wildlife. Please do not bring them to us. There are several licensed wildlife rehabilitators in our region. They request that you call them before taking the animal there. One reason is that you may be able to release the animal under certain circumstances and save the animal from the stress of captivity and travel. Another reason to call is so you can receive instructions about what to do with the animal until it gets to the rehabilitator.

<u>TYPE OF WILDLIFE</u>	<u>REHABILITATOR</u>	<u>PHONE #</u>
Waterfowl, wading birds, game birds, etc.	Michelle Goodman	(215) 779-0731
Native songbirds, woodpeckers, swifts, swallows, etc.	Miriam Moyer	(215) 643-1263
All species of wildlife	The Aark	(215) 968-4963
Raccoons, skunks, groundhogs, foxes, and other rabies vector animals	Connie Joiner	(610) 584-5686
Songbirds	Wild Wings Rehab Clinic	(610) 486-6067
All birds including oiled birds	Tri-State Bird Rescue	(302) 737-9543
All wildlife	Schuylkill Wildlife Rehab Center	(215) 482-8217



VOLUNTEERS FROM HyPEX ADD “LEVERAGE” TO MILL RESTORATION

By Henry C. (Hank) Webster

Evans-Mumbower Mill is located on the Wissahickon Creek at Swedesford Rd. in Upper Gwynedd Township. It is the only existing example of the many small mills that were an integral part of early life and commerce in the Wissahickon Valley. The mills produced flour from locally grown grains, which was an early export from Colonial America.

WVWA has been restoring Evans-Mumbower mill since it was acquired in 1987. Much of the exterior has been restored. Work is now focused on renovating the actual milling machinery.

WVWA's plan is to be able to show visitors how grain was turned to flour, and to include mill visits in our WVWA education program. This is an ambitious program that requires time and effort from staff members, board members and numerous volunteers.

One volunteer is Jim Hasson, the chairman of HyPex Inc., a precision machining

company located in Southampton, PA. Jim lives almost on the Wissahickon and is a regular user of our trail system. Jim became interested in the mill project and offered to make in his machine shop any metal parts needed in restoring the mill machinery. He dispatched HyPex design engineer Art Laney to take measurements and to design the parts. The results are custom levers that would make any 18th century blacksmith proud.



The photo shows a lever system that will allow the miller to regulate the space between the grindstones, thus controlling the flour quality.

We extend our sincere thanks to Jim for his generosity and our appreciation to Art and his assistants for their expert craftsmanship. We invite our readers to stop by the Mill to see the results of their work. Evans-Mumbower Mill is open to the public from 1 to 4 p.m. on the third Sunday of each month from May through October. Docents are on hand to explain the history and the restoration of the Mill.

REI GRANT SUPPORTS COMPUTERIZED TRAILHEAD LOCATORS

Representatives from the REI store in Conshohocken visited WVWA headquarters in July to present a check for \$4,800 for trail improvements and the purchase of a GPS system.

Director of Stewardship Bob Adams will plot the coordinates of the trailheads along the Green Ribbon Trail and on other WVWA preserves. Those coordinates will then be posted on our website by board member Jamie Stewart. Trail work will include the installation of boardwalks and small bridges, with REI and other volunteers participating. It's all part of a new effort to make WVWA trails and preserves more visible and more accessible to the community.



Randy Gray, WVWA's new executive director, accepts a check from Matt Bergerson, the store manager of REI Conshohocken, while Charles Kline, an REI outreach specialist, looks on.

Photo by Bob Adams.

THE REAL BACKBONE BEHIND TEX MEX 5K RACE

By Carol DeLancey, Director of Special Events

For 17 years Jane Keyes, owner of the colorful Southwestern Restaurant and Bar in North Wales known as the Tex Mex Connection, has hosted the Tex Mex 5K Race for Open Space. For the past seven of those years, the Wissahickon Valley Watershed Association has been the beneficiary of this popular race. Since 2000, the event has netted over \$81,000 for WVWA.

Jane Keyes is committed to preserving open space, so treating hundreds of runners and volunteers to a Taco Buffet replete with Margaritas and Beer in the restaurant's parking lot is her way of supporting preservation. We thank Jane for her commitment, her tireless work on this event and her wonderful sense of generosity!

The 2006 race attracted more than 650 runners and walkers. Ninety-five volunteers helped with registration, handed out water, and guided the runners around the course. Doylestown Medical Healing Arts Center's Dr. John King-Marino, was the presenting sponsor and Master of the Race. Additional sponsors include: Born to Run Shoe Store in Springhouse, BDU Corporation, Fast Signs of North Penn, First Service Bank, Kale Design, William R. May Funeral Home, Merck Sharp & Dohme, North Wales Running Company, Point Tire, Port-a-Bowl, Prescott Insurance, Sports Unlimited of Plymouth Meeting, Wish's Water Ice and World Wide Stereo.

WVWA and Tex Mex Connection give a special thanks to the North Wales Police Department, North Wales Water Authority and the North Penn Volunteer Fire Department for their assistance with the race.



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215-646-8866 • www.wvwa.org

Return Service Requested

It's Time To Walk For the Wissahickon

Join the 2006 Walk for the Wissahickon on Sunday, October 1, 2007 and experience the diversity of your watershed. Choose to hike 5, 8, 13 or all 21 miles of the Green Ribbon Trail, from North Wales to the Schuylkill River. All of the hikes are led by experienced leaders and are supported throughout. Hikers are returned to their cars by bus.

New this year is the Open Space Walkabout or Ramble. Led by WVWA's naturalists, this 2.75 nature walk introduces people to WVWA's adjoining preserves in Whitpain, Camp Woods and Armentrout. Participants can choose to take a guided walk or a self-guided ramble at their own pace. See the old woods where General Washington's troops slept or discover the diverse habitats along the forest edges. This is ideal for families, nature lovers or those who would prefer to walk at their own pace.

Look for your event brochure or sign up on line at: www.WVWA.org.

KUDZU IN OUR MIDST

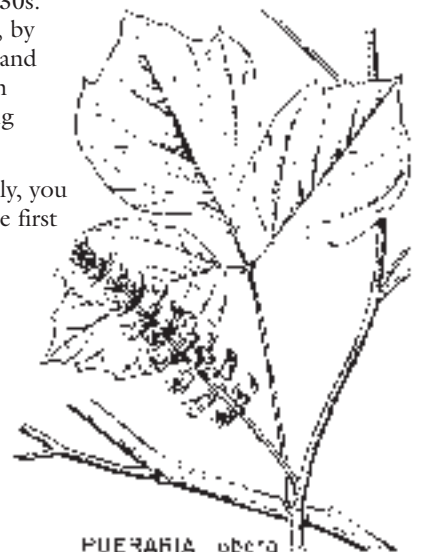
by Judith Gratz, Director of Environmental Education

The invasive vine, Kudzu, has been discovered covering the trees and shrubs on the property adjacent to the Wissahickon Waterfowl Preserve. Be on the lookout for it on your property.

Kudzu can spread up to one foot per day, killing everything in its path. Kudzu-infested land becomes unusable. Natural habitats that support bio-diversity, wildlife, recreational use and natural beauty are lost.

Kudzu is an aggressive, climbing or trailing, herbaceous vine with an extensive fleshy root system having large mealy tuberous roots. It was planted for erosion control by the Soil Conservation Corps in the 1930s. It reproduces with shoots coming from the roots, by sending out new roots from nodes on the stems, and with seeds. The plant flowers in late July through early September, producing flattened hairy fruiting pods containing numerous kidney-shaped seeds.

Begin controlling it as soon as you see it; hopefully, you will not be invaded. One method of control – the first step in an integrated pest management strategy – is to mow it. Kudzu does not tolerate repeated mowing. Also, it will die back when winter frost begins, but will reappear in spring. For more information about Kudzu, go to the web. You will find numerous citations and some amazing photos of the problems Kudzu can present.





Calendar of Events

October, November, December, 2006

215-646-8866 • www.wvwa.org • info@wvwa.org

EVENTS FOR THE WHOLE COMMUNITY

Walk For The Wissahickon

Sunday, October 1

Choose to hike 5, 8, 13 or all 21 miles of the Green Ribbon Trail, from North Wales to the Schuylkill River. Or do the Open Space Walkabout or Ramble on the 2.75 mile loop trail at the Armentrout Preserve, designed for families and those who want a more leisurely experience. Registration Fees and start times vary. Please refer to the brochure or our website, www.wvwa.org. or call 215-646-8866 for more information.

Evans-Mumbower Mill Open Houses

Sunday, September 17 and Sunday, October 15, 1 – 4 p.m.

Visit an eighteenth century grist mill being restored by volunteers of the Wissahickon Valley Watershed Association. Trained docents will help you learn about the history of the Wissahickon and about the early residents of the watershed. Admission is free.

Serve The Preserve

Swedesford Road, Lower Gwynedd

Saturday, October 28, 9 a.m. - noon

Lift your shovels and help with tree planting and preserve maintenance. Scout troops and community organizations are welcome. Call Bob Adams to sign up at 215-646-8866 Ext 14. Park in the Gwynedd Wildlife Preserve lot on Swedesford Road, cross the road and move down the trail to the worksite.

EDUCATIONAL FAMILY PROGRAMS

Insect Games

Fort Washington State Park

Sunday, September 10, 2:30 p.m.

Make friends with a bug at this fun family program. We will catch insects and watch them participate in miniature competitions. Cheer on your athlete as it does the high jump, sprint or fast fly away. Presented by the Wissahickon Valley Watershed Association. Call 215-646-8866 to register. For ages 5 and up. The cost is \$4 per child. Meet at the playground parking area in Fort Washington State Park.

Creek Peek

Four Mills Nature Reserve

Sunday, September 17, 2 p.m.

Wade into the cool water of the Wissahickon Creek to discover the amazing animals that live there. We will collect insects, crayfish, and fish, and view them on a special television that makes them easier to see. Wear shorts and water shoes or old sneakers that can get wet.

Ages 5 and up. Members \$2. Nonmembers \$4 per child. Meet at Four Mills Barn, 12 Morris Road.

Who is Under There?

Fort Washington State Park
Sunday, October 8, 2:30 p.m.

Look under rocks, leaves and logs to find the hiding places of many different small animals. You will also learn about food chains by playing a game to learn who eats whom. Presented by the Wissahickon Valley Watershed Association. Call 215-646-8866 to register. The cost is \$4 per child. Meet at the Hawk Watch Platform in Fort Washington State Park.

Walk For the Wissahickon: Open Space Walkabout or Ramble

Armentrout Preserve - Sunday, October 1 (Rain date Oct. 8)
10 a.m. or 12 noon. Registration begins at 9:30 a.m.

Let our naturalists show you the beauty and mystery of old woods, open fields and forest edges on a 2.75 mile guided walk of the Armentrout and Camp Woods Preserves or take a self-guided Ramble. Learn about field and edge habitats as you raise money for the WVWA to protect additional properties. Fees vary; Children age 3 and under participate for free. Visit www.wvwa.org or call 215- 646-8866 for directions and more information.

A Walk in Owl Woods

Fort Washington State Park
Sunday, November 5, 2:30 p.m.

Owls often nest in the evergreen stand at Fort Washington State Park. We will walk through the area looking for signs of owls. We will also dissect owl pellets to learn what they eat. Presented by the Wissahickon Valley Watershed Association. Call 215-646-8866 to pre register. Pre registration is required. The cost is \$5 per child. Meet at the Hawk Watch Platform in Fort Washington State Park.

Native American Tribal Life

Four Mills Nature Reserve
Sunday, November 19, 11 a.m. or 2 p.m.

The first people who lived in this area were the Lenni Lenape. Learn what they gathered from nature for food, shelter, clothing, and entertainment. Experience how to shoot a homemade bow and arrow, and play games that Lenni Lenape children played to sharpen their hunting skills. This is a terrific experience for families and for scout groups. Meet at the Barn, 12 Morris Road. Call to pre-register. Ages 6 and up. Members-\$2: Nonmembers-\$4 per child.

A Winter Walk

Fort Washington State Park
Sunday, December 3, 2:30 p.m.

Take a stroll to admire the winter landscape. We will notice the ways that plants and animals are preparing for the cold weather. Presented by the Wissahickon Valley Watershed Association. Call 215-646-8866 to register. The cost is \$4 per person. Meet at the parking area closest to Joshua Road in Fort Washington State Park.

Mini Camp

Four Mills Nature Reserve
Sunday, December 10, 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Children ages 6 to 9 can attend a four-hour “camp” at WVWA while you get ready for the holidays. We will take a nature walk, play nature games, and meet the live animals. Bring lunch, beverages and snack. Must pre register. Fee: \$20. Minimum number of children: 8 to hold the program. Meet at Four Mills Barn, 12 Morris Road.
