

Fall 2007

VOLUME 50, 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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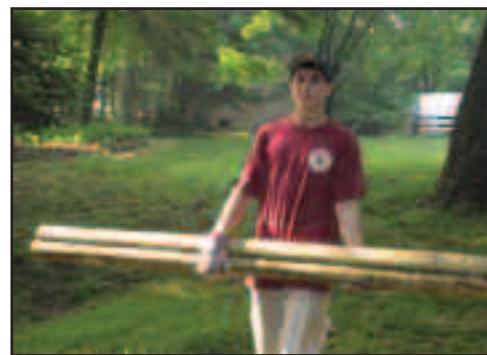
## NEWS FROM THE TRAIL



We have been busy working on the Green Ribbon Trail this summer, and it shows. Our new Stewardship Assistant Chris Bergerson and our intern Sean Duffy have installed numerous small bridges and boardwalks along the upper section of the Green Ribbon Trail, which should help walkers to keep their feet dry. Eagle Scout candidate Chris Smith and Lansdale Scout Troop 303 installed about 165 feet of boardwalk in June, which was a huge help to us.

Chris Bergerson attended the Pennsylvania Trails Conference in Pittsburgh last May, and that combined with his prior experience in the Western US have equipped him to design and install water bars, earthen structures which send storm water off the trail before it begins to erode the trail surface. By removing the cause of erosion, we are not only protecting the Wissahickon from sediment pollution, we are keeping a significant amount of pressure-treated lumber out of the landscape.

We will be walking the Green Ribbon Trail with a GPS unit, courtesy of an REI grant, to determine where our mile marker signs will go. The REI grant will also pay for those signs. They should be up by September, and will let walkers determine how far they've gone on the Trail. Once all this good work is finished, we'll redo the roadside trail signs to make them more visible to car traffic. If you've been thinking about doing the Walkathon, this would be a great year to begin; the Trail has never looked better! ❁



*Eagle Scout Chris Smith*

## MEMBERS' 50TH BIRTHDAY PARTY

Wednesday, October 24 • 7 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. at The Ambler Theater

Celebrate 50 years of preservation with your fellow members of WVWA. Enjoy light hors d'oeuvres, then enjoy Jamie Stewart's stunning slide show tour of the watershed. We are especially excited to be one of the first groups to hold an event in the Ambler Theater's newly-renovated large theater! Watch your mailbox for your invitation and let us know that you'll come. ❁





## WATER QUALITY

In the spring of 2007 WVWA agreed to be part of a planning study of the headwaters area of the Wissahickon Creek. This area has been a target of our monitoring program for several years.

The planning study is known as a Comprehensive Area Resources Plan or CARP. Broad goals of the study are to:

- Ensure an adequate supply of suitable quality water by balancing existing and anticipated needs of both human uses and ecosystem needs;
- To restore and protect the hydrologic functions of the natural ecosystem of the upper Wissahickon watershed (the headwaters); and
- To implement a coordinated water resource management plan.

The CARP study is a pilot study managed by the Delaware River Basin Commission, Pennsylvania's Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, and the Montgomery County Planning Commission. WVWA is a part of the technical team supporting the study.

In addition, WVWA is participating in a watershed-wide study of algae, managed by the Philadelphia Water Department. The presence of nutrients that support algae growth has been demonstrated by both the PWD and WVWA water monitoring programs. The current algae study is being conducted to identify potential changes affecting excess nutrients and to minimize future growth of problem algae. ✱

## WORKING WITH OUR FRIENDS

*By Bob Adams*

As part of a continuing effort to work with our regional conservation partners, WVWA is joining hands (and shovels) with our friends at the Friends of the Wissahickon and the Friends of Fort Washington State Park. The FOW have always focused their efforts on the "city side" of the Wissahickon, while we have taken on the larger suburban end of the valley, and FFWSP have concentrated on the upkeep of the State Park. Good things usually come from partnerships, so we have decided to try a joint project.



On Saturday, October 20, volunteers from all three groups will meet in the Fort Washington State Park (in the section off Mill Rd. in Flourtown) to replace an invasive plant known as Japanese hops with native trees and shrubs. The hops have taken over a small peninsula in the Wissahickon, crowding out all the good native plants. WVWA will spray the hops with glyphosate this summer to kill it back, and on the workday in October, WVWA, FOW and FFWSP volunteers will come out and plant appropriate native plants on the site. WVWA will continue to monitor the site to kill off the hops when it tries to come back (and it will try). As Bogart said in Casablanca, "This could be the beginning of a beautiful friendship."

Contact Bob Adams at (215)-646-8866 for more information. ✱

### 2006 ANNUAL REPORT

A report of the Watershed's activities and a list of donors from the year 2006 is available on our website, [www.wvwa.org](http://www.wvwa.org). If you would like a paper copy, please call the office at (215) 646-8866. We apologize for omitting the following information from the annual report.

<b>Gifts in memory of Betsy Corson</b>	<b>Companies that made Matching Gifts</b>	<b>Corporate Sponsor</b>
Phil and Barbara Albright	Aetna Foundation	North Wales Water Authority
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## THE WALK FOR THE WISSAHICKON ADDS SOMETHING OLD

The 11th annual Walk for the Wissahickon is scheduled for Sunday, September 30. The Walkathon features the usual "Challenge Hike" of all 21-miles of the Green Ribbon Trail. Hikers may also choose a 13-mile hike that ends on West Valley Green Road in Flourtown, an 8-mile hike that ends at WVWA's headquarters in Ambler, or a 5-mile hike that ends at Penllyn Woods in Lower Gwynedd.

New this year is the "Historical Walk" of 2.5-miles that begins in North Wales and ends with a short tour of WVWA's nineteenth century Evans-Mumbower Mill. This is ideal for families and history buffs!

Our most popular hike is the 8-mile, which ends at lunchtime at WVWA's headquarters in Ambler. Before hikers board the buses back to North Wales, we will have a brief stop for lunch so that people can chat and find out more about the 8-miles they just walked. We are asking everyone to pack a lunch. WVWA will treat people to beverages and dessert.

Buses will meet the hikers at stops throughout the day to transport them back to the start point in North Wales; all hikes are led by trained leaders, and supported by "chase" vehicles.

The Walkathon is one of WVWA's most visible fundraising events. Our goal is to raise \$ 25,000 for WVWA programs in Environmental Education and Stewardship. To participate or to volunteer, please contact Carol DeLancey at [carol@wvwa.org](mailto:carol@wvwa.org), or visit our website, [www.wvwa.org](http://www.wvwa.org). ✱



# GRIST FOR THE MILL

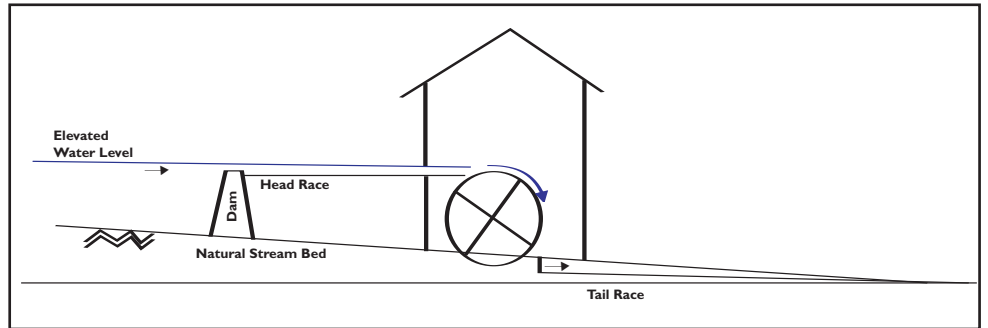
By H. Kirk Horstman

What is the connection between a watershed and a mill? The answer is simple: it's a stream! In the case of Evans-Mumbower Mill, it is the Wissahickon Creek.

Throughout history the basic premise of milling has been the same. The idea is to let water do the majority of the work, using a waterwheel to transfer the energy in the flowing water to a rotating shaft, which operates the mill machinery. In the case of grist mills, the main objective is to turn millstones so that they can grind grain into flour or meal.

As the centuries passed, clever millwrights thought of many other methods for using the water power by means of attachments and accessories. These additional machines were connected by shafts, pulleys and belts. At Evans-Mumbower Mill, for instance, there is a bag hoist that was used to lift the heavy sacks on and off the delivery wagons. Depending on the number of machines in operation at any given time, Evans-Mumbower Mill needed a source of energy capable of generating 20 to 40 horsepower.

Wissahickon Creek is normally a slow moving stream because the slope of the stream bottom is quite gradual. The overall drop in elevation is 440 feet over the course of 21 miles. There are no natural waterfalls like the ones you might see on calendar



photos. Mill owners in southeastern Pennsylvania usually needed to create “artificial waterfalls” by constructing dams across the creek upstream from their mills. Another approach was to intercept water from a side tributary at a point uphill from the mill. This was common in the lower Wissahickon Valley, where the side slopes are steep.

Even with the construction of upstream dams, the millers of the Wissahickon Valley could not always take the stream for granted. For example, Henry Mumbower is recorded as commenting in 1854 that the volume of water in the stream had diminished by one-half since he began working there in 1883. As a result, he could do less milling. He ascribed the situation in large part to the clearing of the woods in the surrounding area. Forests in the watershed had been cut down and replaced by agricultural

fields. The forests had held the storm water and allowed it to seep slowly into the Creek, but the cleared land allowed soil erosion and a rush of storm water into the Creek, causing excess sedimentation.

That diminution in water is one of the reasons that Mumbower installed a steam engine to provide auxiliary power (it should be noted that the steam engine also needed water from the stream to run, although a much lesser amount).

If you visit Evans-Mumbower Mill during our Fall Festival on September 15 or during the Open House on October 15, you will see some of the restored machinery inside the Mill. Millwright Ben Hassett is hard at work building a new waterwheel, gears and pulleys. Since the old mill dam and headrace are long gone, our challenge now is figuring out how to move water over the wheel. \*

# TEX MEX 5K RACE FOR OPEN SPACE WAS HOT, HOT, HOT

On June 27, one of this summer's hottest evenings, over 1,000 runners and 150 walkers took their marks for the 18th Tex Mex Connection 5K Race for Open Space, breaking all previous attendance records – by a lot! The “Tex Mex” is known to be a fun race, in large part because of the festive party that follows the race. The “fiesta” includes one of Tex Mex Connection’s famous margaritas or a beer, a plate of tacos, salad and chips and live music. The event raised over \$25,000 for WVVA’s programs. We thank our very generous sponsors, listed below.



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## HELP WVWA RECEIVE DONATIONS FROM BUSINESSES

Our members know their annual membership gifts are vital to our success in protecting the Wissahickon Creek. Another way for WVWA members to help us receive donations is to designate WVWA as the recipient of donations from Genuardi's/Safeway when you use your Genuardi's card. They will donate up to 3% of the total amount of members' purchases each year. You can do that by stopping at the service desk at your local Genuardi's or you can go online to [www.escrip.com](http://www.escrip.com) and sign up or renew. WVWA's group ID number is 149362336. If you have signed up in the past, please renew now. It only takes one click! The same arrangement works if you have a card for Macy's, Lands End, or Linens 'n' Things.

Commerce Bank will donate up to .5% of the total of WVWA members' savings, checking, CD's or Money Market accounts on deposit each year. The money doesn't come from your account, it comes from the Bank. WVWA doesn't find out which of our members are participating; we only learn the total number of households from the bank. We need to have 50 households participating, and so far we only have 13. Help us reach our goal by contacting the Abington Branch of Commerce Bank and either opening an account or telling them to designate an existing account in any Commerce branch for credit to WVWA. Abington Branch is where WVWA has its business accounts. For more information, call Adam Epstein, the manager of Abington Branch at (215) 517-7000. ❁

## HOLIDAY GIFTS

This is the last issue of "Currents" that you will receive before the 2007 holiday season. We'd like to remind you that you can give your family and friends lovely gifts that will also benefit the Watershed Association.

You may order copies of the beautiful book, *Wissahickon: Worth Preserving* by calling the office at (215) 646-8866. The books are also on sale at local Barnes and Noble and Borders stores, as well as at the Morris Arboretum and the Wild Bird Center in the Willow Grove Shopping Center.

Copies of the new map of the Upper Green Ribbon Trail and WVWA preserves are also available from the Watershed office. You can also order shirts, hats, jackets, fleece vests and canvas bags, all bearing the WVWA logo. All of these items can also be viewed on and an order form printed out from our website, [www.wvwa.org](http://www.wvwa.org).

Please also consider making an end-of-year gift in honor or memory of someone very special to you. We will include that person's name in our annual report, and if your gift is \$250 or more, we will plant a tree in that person's name.

All of these gifts signify your own commitment to taking care of our environment and they acknowledge the interest of the recipients, as well. The proceeds from all the items on sale and from end-of-year gifts go entirely to support WVWA programs.❁

❁ All photos are by Jamie Stewart unless otherwise noted. ❁



*September, 2007 - January, 2008*

## EVENTS FOR THE WHOLE COMMUNITY

### Evans-Mumbower Mill Fall Festival

Saturday, September 15  
12:00 noon – 4:00 p.m.

Spend an afternoon in the 1800's. Tour this 19th century grist mill, see demonstrations of historic crafts, play long-forgotten games, visit the Mill's museum, and take a walk on the Green Ribbon Trail. Admission is free. For directions, visit [www.wvwa.org](http://www.wvwa.org).

### Bird Seed Sale

Pre-Order by October 5  
Pick Up Friday, October 12, 2p.m. - 5p.m. and Saturday,  
October 13, 9 a.m. - 1p.m.

Support WVWA and purchase your bird seed at our fall sale. Pre-order your seed by October 5 - black oil sunflower, cracked corn, nyjer, suet cakes, premium blends and more. Look for your order form in the mail or find one on our website at [www.wvwa.org](http://www.wvwa.org). Volunteers are needed to load seed into cars or help with paperwork. Contact Lisa Hansell at [lisa@wvwa.org](mailto:lisa@wvwa.org) or call (215) 646-8866 if you can help.

### WVWA/FOW/FFWSP Joint Restoration Project

Ft. Washington State Park  
Day Use Area, West Mill Road, Flourtown  
Saturday, October 20  
9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. or until work is done

Volunteers from WVWA, the Friends of the Wissahickon and Friends of Fort Washington State Park will combine their efforts to restore native plants on a peninsula that has formed in the Wissahickon Creek as it travels parallel to West Mill Road in Flourtown. Invasive Japanese hops have been removed by WVWA staff, and volunteers are asked to come prepared for digging holes and planting trees and shrubs. Contact Bob Adams at (215) 646-8866 Ext. 14 or [bob@wvwa.org](mailto:bob@wvwa.org) to sign up or for more information.

### Members' 50th Birthday Party

Wednesday, October 24  
7 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.  
Ambler Theater

Celebrate 50 years of preservation with your fellow members of WVWA. Enjoy light hors d'oeuvres, then enjoy Jamie Stewart's stunning slide show tour of the watershed. We are especially excited to be one of the first groups to hold an event in the Ambler Theater's newly-renovated large theater! Watch your mailbox for your invitation and let us know that you'll come.

## WEEKEND CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS

### Building Fun in the Woods

Sunday, September 23, 2007  
2:30 p.m.

Meet at the Penllyn Woods Community Building. Call (215) 646-8866 for directions. Enjoy playing in nature. We will build houses, forts or bug bungalows out of the branches, grasses and other natural materials that we find in the woods. This is fun for kids and adults and is a great way to enjoy nature. There are usually surprises everywhere you look. \$6 per child. Ages 5 and up.

### In Owl Woods

Sunday, October 14  
2:30 p.m.

This is National Children's Day. So take a child to a wonderful program about owls – a topic that fascinates almost everyone. Meet in Fort Washington State Park at the Hawk Watch. We will take a walk in the woods where the Great Horned Owls nest and look for signs that they are there. After our walk you will have the chance to see several kinds of mounted owls and learn about their special features. Following that you will dissect an owl pellet – the coughed up remains of the prey the owl ate. \$6 per child. Ages 6 and up.

### Native American Tribal Life

Sunday, November 18  
Two Sessions: 11:00 a.m. and 1:30 p.m.  
WVWA Barn (12 Morris Road, Ambler)

Learn about what life was like for the Native Americans who lived in this area before the Europeans arrived. Step into a simulated wigwam, learn to shoot with a bow and arrow, pound corn into meal, play Native American games and more. This is a hands-on program that gives a sense of a culture based on the natural world. \$6 per child. Ages 5 and up.

### Winter Mini-Camp

Sunday, December 9  
10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.  
WVWA Barn (12 Morris Road, Ambler)

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. Children should bring lunch. Preregistration is required and a minimum of 8 children must sign up or the program will be canceled. Call (215) 646-8866 to register. Fee: \$25 per child.

# THE POND OUTING

By Judith Gratz

*“Wow, did you see that huge bird  
fly away?  
It looked like a pterodactyl!  
Awesome.”*

*“Hey, look at that blue dragonfly.”*

*“Listen to that frog.  
It sounds like it has a sore throat.”*

The voices of children making discoveries are some of the best sounds you will ever hear, especially if they are the voices of your children or grandchildren. A pond is a terrific place to go exploring and discover nature's delights. The pond at Penllyn Woods\* is one I recommend highly. You don't have to be able to identify anything to enjoy yourself! And, if you have a child with you, you can enhance your visit by finding things together. Use the tip below to help you locate activity anywhere around the pond. You will be amazed at how much enjoyment you can share using this method.



Approach a pond slowly and silently, then stand quietly so you can see and hear the pleasing variety of birds, frogs, turtles, dragonflies (they do not bite or sting), butterflies, and other fascinating pond critters, depending on the season. A walk around a pond can reveal things you may not have seen or heard at your first stop. You can also listen for the silence. Once the animals know you are there, they may be quiet. Perhaps they will start “talking” again when they see you are not invading their territory or a threat. There will be some creatures that will continue to go about their business regardless of your presence, and that could be fun to watch as you get to see how they live. There are no dangerous animals living in or near the ponds in our area, although mosquitoes and bees can be pesky at times.

If you want to identify what you are seeing, take a basic field guide such as Pond Life, A Golden Guide, with you. The spring and summer pond will have Red-winged Blackbirds, Little Green Herons, Great Blue Herons, Green frogs, Bull frogs, turtles, and Water Striders, to name a few. If you scoop up some water and look at it with a magnifying glass, you may see some small creatures that are important parts of the food web of the pond such as Water fleas and Hydra. You can recognize them by their movements: Water fleas dart about, and Hydra somersault.

Be sure that when you are in a natural area such as a pond, to respect and don't collect any living creatures or plants. If there is a healthy pond, everything you see, and many things you don't see, contributes to its health.

Join our educator, Veronica, on Sunday, September 23 at 2:00 p.m. for a visit to the pond and other parts of Penllyn Woods. Call the WVWA office to register and to get directions.

\*Penllyn Woods is a 77 acre park owned by Lower Gwynedd Township. It is open to the public from dawn to dusk, and is not limited to residents of the township. There is plenty of parking, and a map of the trails is located in the community building on site.

## Tip to enhance your pond experience:

Look at the pond as if it were a clock with you standing at 6:00. Directly across the pond is 12:00, with 3:00 is to your right and 9:00 to your left. No matter where you are standing at a pond, you are at 6:00. In this way you and anyone else who sees something that he or she wants to point out, there is a reference point. Even children as young as 5 can understand this if you have them make a clock out of a paper plate, and put the numbers 3, 6, 9, and 12 in the right place for them. When they go to a pond, they can take the plate with them to help them tell you where to look when they see something interesting.