

Wissahickon Valley Watershed Association

Winter 2004 - 2005

12 MORRIS RD., AMBLER, PA 19002-5499

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Support & Serve

Tatiana Zell, a longtime member of WVWA, participates in birding walks, bird seed sale, attends the annual dinner, donates to the various WVWA fundraisers, and is a real cheerleader for the Association.

What is it about this Association that appeals to Tatiana? In the 40 years I have lived in this area I have witnessed the disappearance of open space, and so the diminished number of birds and bird species visiting my garden. I believe that the WVWA is the only local organization that is actively engaged in preserving open space and in the education which is so important for now and the next generation.

Got bird seed? Marsha Pearson, owner of The Wild Bird

bird feeders at her store in exchange for a donation to the WVWA. When it comes to raffle items at the annual meeting, Marsha is first in line to donate. The Birdathon is another event she supports - as a team member and a pledge raiser. What motivates Marsha to support WVWA in so many ways?



From L. to R. Tatiana Zell, Marsha Pearson, Maureen Pearson at the bird seed pick up.

Center in Willow Grove, arranged the recent bird seed sale for WVWA so that we continue to sell the highest quality seed at affordable prices. She also cleans

Even more today than ever our watershed areas play an important role in the lives we lead. The Birdathon is only one way in which bird health is monitored and the hard work that is done by WVWA staff and volunteers can be measured. That is what is

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IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT

Annual Meeting To Change Format in 2005

This year's Annual Meeting of the Watershed Association will have an entirely new look! At 6 p.m. on Thursday, April 21, we will gather to have the usual excellent hors d'oeuvres and beverages. While enjoying socializing with other members of WVWA, you will be able to visit exhibits presented by our staff, who will answer your questions about the work we do in conservation and environmental education. At 7 p.m. there will be a brief business meeting, including the election of board members. You can expect an early adjournment. Watch for an invitation in the mail around mid-March.

SERVE THE PRESERVE ON THE WISSAHICKON THIS SPRING

For the first time, Serve The Preserve will not be held on one of WVWA's preserves this spring, and we are excited about that! Properties Manager Bob Adams encouraged Philadelphia Electric (PECO) to allow us to

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The Walkathon that Almost Wasn't - and Its Winners!

Hurricane Jeanne settled over Ambler just before the 8th annual Walk for the Wissahickon. The Creek rose up and came into the Four Mills Barn. Then it poured again all day that Thursday. Despite the soaking, we all doubled our efforts to get the trail and the barn back into shape for the Walkathon on Sunday, October 2.

Sunday morning turned out to be a bright, crisp fall day. We received word in the morning that the lower section of the trail that had been under several feet of dirt, had been cleared late Saturday. This made it possible for the Challenge hikers to complete their 21 Mile Hike once again!

The wet weather dampened our turnout slightly, but the event was definitely successful. The Walk for the Wissahickon raised \$33,000 from Corporate Sponsors, registration fees and pledges.

Kudos to the top pledge earners. Our top prize, dinner for two at the Valley Green Inn and a \$100 gift certificate to REI in Conshohocken, goes to David Bower. David Fernley took second prize - a catered dinner for six from Lower Gwynedd's newest in-home caterer, Canapé. Our other top pledge earners include: William Devine, Elizabeth Hunter, Robert Gottschalk, Beth Pilling, James Rowan, Cheryl Sargent, Nancy Smith and Ted Wood, Jr. Many thanks to all of our hikers who worked to collect pledges.

Our Corporate Sponsors enable the Association to continue many of its programs through their support. **The Presenting Sponsor was McNeil Consumer and Specialty Pharmaceuticals** located in Fort Washington. McNeil hosts a hearty group who join us for the Hike.

Environmental Sponsors include:

- Timoney Knox L.L.P. Attorneys at Law
- Sloane Automotive
- MSS Movers Specialty Service, Inc.,
- Johnson and Johnson Pharmaceutical Research & Development, L.L.C.
- Union Electrical Contracting Company.

Conservationist Sponsors include:

- Abington Bank
- Cornerstone Media, Inc.
- C.P. Fletcher Motors, Inc.
- Magarity Chevrolet
- Russell Roofing
- Spahr-Evans Printers
- Valley Green Inn
- Wapiti Archers
- Webco Controls, Inc.

Creek Keeper Sponsors include:

- Ambler Theater
- Bowman Properties, LTD
- Knopf Motors, Inc.
Larson, Allen, Weishair & Co., L.L.P.
- Power Line Packaging
- REI
- Edwin F. Roberts Landscaping
- Whole Foods Market

Media Sponsor:

- Montgomery Newspapers

Many thanks to the following people who helped make this event so successful:

- North Penn Volunteer Fire Department
- Philadelphia Canoe Club
- Germantown Academy
- Morris Arboretum
- Lower Gwynedd Township
- Upper Gwynedd Township
- Whitmarsh Police Department
- Whole Foods Market

Thanks to those who contributed prizes:

- Ambler Theater
- Blue Bell Inn
- Canapé
- Cin Cin
- Coleman's of Normandy Farm
- Iron Hill Brewery
- Joseph Ambler Inn
- Phil's Tavern
- Washington House of Sellersville
- William Penn Inn
- Valley Green Inn

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plant a shade buffer along both sides of the Wissahickon as it winds through their power line right-of-way in Upper Gwynedd. This is big news!

In the past PECO managed the land below their power lines by mowing annually and either removing or pruning severely any woody plants. This made sense from their point of view, but had an adverse effect on the health of the Wissahickon. The Wissahickon is still a small creek in Upper

Gwynedd, and that much direct sunlight warms the water rapidly. This has two immediate effects. Warm water holds much less oxygen than cool water, oxygen that aquatic animals need to live. Secondly, the sunlight stimulates green algae growth, which uses up even more of the remaining oxygen. By the time the Wissahickon makes it through this 4000-foot long area, there is a marked difference in water quality, and not for the better.

WVWA proposed planting a 25-foot wide buffer on both sides of the creek, using shrubs and small trees such

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most important to me.”

When Keith Bance was getting ready to hike the entire Appalachian Trail last year, he asked friends and family to make a per mile donation to either WVWA or to his church. When he finished the 2,174 mile hike which began March 1 in Georgia and ended August 29 in Maine, he had raised \$ 1,460 for WVWA.

The youth group from his church, St. Peter's Lutheran Church in North Wales, regularly do service projects in their community and as a result of Keith's connection with WVWA they chose to work on the 4 Mills property. On a Sunday afternoon in November, four of the group's members, their parents and Keith came to the rescue of small trees and shrubs that had been planted in the floodplain across the Creek from the WVWA headquarters Barn. These plants had been knocked over by the fierce flooding of tropical storm Jeanne. Most still had their roots in the ground but were tilted in the direction of the flow, and smothered with organic debris. They had little chance of surviving without help. The volunteers replanted them and staked them out, plus planted new trees and shrubs. Because of their efforts, the plants have a good chance of surviving.

There are so many ways of supporting your Watershed Association. We hope to see you soon at our upcoming events.

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as dogwood. This will shade the creek without getting tall enough to be a danger to the power lines. PECO not only agreed to our plan, they generously provided a \$7000 donation towards the project. This in turn enabled us to land a Growing Greener Grant from Pennsylvania's DEP.

Attention Business Owners!!

You may be able to help WVWA in a special way if you own a business that is subject to the following taxes in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania:

- Corporate Net Income Tax
- Capital Stock Franchise Tax
- Bank and Trust Company Shares Tax
- Title Insurance Companies Shares Tax
- Insurance Premiums Tax,
- Mutual Thrift Institutions Tax.

In 2001, the legislature passed Act 4, which amended the Public School Code to provide for the establishment of the Educational Improvement Tax Credit (EITC), administered by the Dept. of Community and Economic Development. Under Act 4, *businesses that make contributions to "approved" educational improvement organizations can receive tax credits from the Commonwealth equal to 75% of their contributions to the "approved" organizations, up to \$100,000 per year.*

The Watershed Association has just received approval as an educational improvement organization for its programs for teacher training and for children with special needs. If you are interested in making a gift through the EITC initiative, please contact Donna Middleton, Director of Development, at Extension 16.

This will be a big job, and we will need lots of help. Because of the importance of providing this buffer, we have decided to base Serve the Preserve around this project this spring. We hope you all will come out and help us with this very worthwhile project. Call Bob Adams for details. (215) 646-8866 ext. 14.

Funny Faces cont'd. from p. 4

*Camp Woods
Penllyn Natural Area
Crossways Preserve
Evans-Mumbower Mill*

Call the office for directions to these preserves.

Evans-Mumbower Mill Open House Tours

Free tours of the Mill are given on the third Sunday from 1:00 - 4:00 p.m. The dates for tours in 2005 are April 17, May 15, June 19, July 17, Aug. 21, Sept. 18, Oct. 16.

After a brief slide show about the Mill's history, you will take a guided tour to learn more about how the mill worked and what life was like in this area in previous centuries. After the tour you can browse in the museum and see artifacts from the Mill's archaeological dig.

If you would like to train to be a tour guide, contact us:

We Remember

The Watershed Association lost three good friends and strong supporters recently with the passing of Alice Stanley, Regina Peasley and Janet Kirch. These women were strongly committed to protecting the environment through education, good stewardship, and the preservation of natural areas. Alice was a member of the Board of WVWA for many years.

We are grateful to all the people who made contributions to the Watershed Association in their memory.

Funny Forest Faces

Grab a child or a friend and head out into your yard or to a nearby nature preserve such as any of the WVWA-protected properties.* There you will find deciduous trees bare, or mostly bare, of leaves. Now is a great time of year to look at leaf scars and bundle scars.

Leaf scars are the marks left after leaves sever their ties to the twig and fall. To sever ties the tree produces a corky layer where the leaf meets the twig. This cuts off the flow of water and minerals to the leaves. At that point the green chlorophyll dissolves and other pigments that were hidden by the green can now show such as yellow, orange, red, pink, scarlet and purple.

Wherever a leaf grows it leaves a scar when it falls off. Each kind of tree has a distinctive

scar shape. They may be triangular, rectangular, elliptical, round, etc.

You will find little raised dots on the leaf scar. This is where tubes carrying water into, and sugar out of, the leaves can be seen. These dots are called bundle scars.

is that they often look like humorous little faces. You will also see the buds for next year's growth above the leaf scar; this may look like a hat. Go! Have fun!

Walnut Willow Elm

*Nature preserves protected by WVWA where you can walk and explore during daylight hours:

*4 Mills Nature Reserve
Willow Lake Farm
Armentrout Preserve*

Osage Orange Silver Maple

Bundle scars are arranged in a pattern which is specific to each tree specie. What makes leaf and bundle scars so much fun to find

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**SUMMER CAMP
INFORMATION INCLUDED**

Calendar For January - June 2005

(Please call to pre-register your group)

JANUARY

Sun., Jan. 16 2:00 pm BIRD FEEDER WORKSHOP Tray feeders are attractive to many kinds of birds. Make a hanging wooden tray feeder and help birds survive the winter. Hang the feeder near your home and you will be able to enjoy the birds' beauty and learn their habits. You *must* preregister. Ages 7+ \$7 per feeder. Limited number available.

Wed., Jan. 26 Noon SLIDE SHOW: On The Appalachian Trail Keith Bance hiked the entire trail alone in 2004 and took photos along the way. Bring a bag lunch and a friend to hear about this once-in-a-lifetime journey.

FEBRUARY

Sat., Feb. 5, 9 am to 2 pm BIRD SEED PICK UP Come for your preordered bird seed. Call the office if you need an order form. Must order by Thursday, Jan. 27.

Sun., Feb. 20, 2:00 pm OPTICS FOR KIDS We will use various optics to examine animals and other natural objects. Learn to use bug boxes, hand lenses, a microscope, binoculars and a telescope. Ages 6+ and up. Cost \$2 members; \$4 for nonmembers.

Saturday, Feb. 26 and Sunday, Feb. 27 11am - 3pm MAPLE SUGARING FESTIVAL Tour the WVWA's sugarbush to see how maple syrup is made. Then have a waffle with some of our own sweet, pure maple syrup. Park at Germantown Academy tennis court lot and hop a free shuttle bus to WVWA. Before or after your tour, which takes about an hour and a half, you can go on a self-guided walk on the trails and participate in other ongoing events. \$5 per person. *Snow dates: March 5, 6.*

MARCH

Sun., March 20, 2:00 pm TALES AND TRAILS: Somewhere Today by Bert Kitchen Kids will enjoy learning interesting facts about a variety of animals through this beautifully illustrated book. We will take a walk into the woods and create our own books of what is happening today at the 4 Mills Nature Reserve. Ages 5 and up. Cost per child is \$2 for members and \$4 for nonmembers.

APRIL

Sat., April 9, 23, May 7, 21 BIRDING CLASSES See reverse side of this page for details.

Saturday, April 9, 9am -2pm SERVE THE PRESERVE

Sunday, April 17, 2:00 pm Tales and Trails: Miss Rumphius by

Barbara Cooney Miss Rumphius is a story of a woman's quest to fulfill her goals throughout her life. As suggested by the book, we will enjoy the blooming wildflowers that we find on a walk in the woods and do something to make the world more beautiful. Ages 5 and up. Cost per child: \$2 members; \$4 nonmembers.

Thursday, April 21, 6 - 7:30pm ANNUAL MEETING

Saturday, April 30, 9:00- Noon CREEK CLEAN-UP

MAY

Saturday, May 13, 14 BIRDATHON

Sunday, May 15, 2:00 pm HENS & CHICKS PICNIC Extend your Mother's Day celebration with us. You will learn about mother birds, make a bird craft, and have a picnic snack. Pre-registration required. All ages. Cost is \$5 per person.

Sunday, June 12, 2:00 pm A BEE'S LIFE Have you seen the honey bee hives at WVWA? Are you curious about the social lives of bees? Would you like to meet a bee keeper and find out how he works with these insects? Join us to learn about these facinating and beneficial animals and the job of working with them. Ages 5 and up. Per person: \$2 members; \$4 nonmembers.

Birding Classes

You can register for any or all of the birding classes by e-mail - wwa@aol.com - or snail mail. The fee for each class is \$10. Participants in the Birdathon are free. All 4 classes are \$30 for WVWA members. Bring binoculars and field guides. Dress for potentially muddy conditions.

Saturday, April 9 - 8 a.m. - Meet at the Four Mills Barn, 12 Morris Road, Ambler.

Saturday, April 23 - 7:30 a.m. - Meet at Crossways Preserve - Cathcart Road between Morris Rd. and Township Line Rd.

Saturday, May 7 - 7:30 a.m. - Meet at Prophecy Creek Park - Entrance to the Park is on Skippack Pike across from Narcissa Rd.

Saturday, May 21 - All Day - Field Trip to Belleplain State Park in New Jersey. Details will be given to participants when they register. This will be a day trip, but some may want to plan ahead and reserve a room in a nearby motel for Friday night or for the weekend. We will have a gathering time and place on Saturday morning.

To register, send your check and the dates you will attend. Be sure we get your full name, address, phone number and e-mail address if you have one.

Please consider participating in the Birdathon. We can assign you to a team or help you start a new one.

VOLUNTEER TRAINING & CONTINUING EDUCATION

Tuesday, January 4, 10:00 to Noon: Water Conservation Training Learn how to teach this indoor program which we can present here at Four Mills or in local schools.

Monday, January 31, Noon to 2:30 Maple Sugaring Training It's that sweet time of the year again. Come to learn this program or to refresh your memory. We will start out with a lunch of waffles and our own maple syrup and other foods. Then we will go through the program and tap the trees. Please RSVP.

Saturday, February 26 and Sunday, February 27, 11 am to 3 pm Maple Sugaring Festival Please sign up to teach and or tend the fire or heat and serve the waffles on one or both days, all day or for two hours. We hope to attract many scout groups this year through our contacts with their organizations.

Monday, April 4, 9:30 to Noon: Wetlands & Watershed Training We will be teaching all the 3rd and 4th grade students of the Hatboro-Horsham School District at their schools. This is the second year of the program. Your participation is crucial for its success. The children and their teachers were delightful to work with last year.

Monday, May 2, 9:30 to Noon: Insect Detectives Training We will be teaching all the 3rd grade students from the Cheltenham Township School District here at WVWA. They love this program and so will you!

SUMMER DAY CAMP INFORMATION:

Members can obtain a registration form in several different ways:

- print out from our website: www.wwa.org
- call the office to have a form mailed or faxed to you (215) 646-8866 x. 10
- stop by the office to pick up a form

Return the form with your payment ASAP to guarantee a spot for your child this summer.

Registration for members only will begin immediately.

Registration for nonmembers will begin February 7.