



Volume 23 Issue 1

Rails to Trails of Central PA Inc.

January/February 2018

## **FRIEND OR FOE OF NATURE: IT'S TIME TO CHOOSE:**

*By Dave Hurst, 2018 Hurst Media Works*

There's an enemy stealing our natural resources, diminishing our quality of life, making us sicker, working us too hard, depressing us and confining our young.

On Earth Day, 1971, the comic strip character, Pogo, was shown walking through the woods with his companion, Porkypine. "It is hard walking on this stuff," Porkypine said, looking at a forest floor covered with dumped trash. "Yep, son," Pogo responds, "We have met the enemy and he is us."

Today, most Americans don't even get into the woods to see the trash dumped there. A study has documented that on average Americans spend 95 percent of their life indoors.

REI, the outdoor recreational cooperative, and Futerra, an international public relations firm focused on supporting sustainability, have put together a thought-provoking presentation titled "The Path Ahead: The Future of Life Outdoors."

The trends are profoundly disturbing. We are becoming an indoor species with children who get outside four to seven minutes a day. We are separating ourselves from nature and losing our emotional attachment to it.

We're working too much and blurring the lines between work and personal time. Chronic diseases like type 2 diabetes and heart disease are becoming more prevalent along with depression and anxiety.

The average child between the ages of 11 and 14 spends 12 hours a day in front of some type of screen, which is leading to obesity and behavioral issues. Fewer people outside mean less concern for the wise use of our natural resources.

As dismaying as all of this is to write about, I glimpse a reflection of myself in my computer monitor and have to admit: I've met the enemy, and he is me.

Five percent of my day totals 72 minutes. On far too many days, I don't spend that much time outdoors, even adding up my trips away from the house to attend meetings, perform errands and go to the grocery store.

Now I don't watch television at all. Nor do I surf the Internet, spend time on social media or play video games. Yet my work keeps me at a computer and dictates my day. Frequently, I'm on my tablet or phone, making calls and checking e-mail.

If I take the time to exercise – something that's been happening with decreasing frequency – it's more likely to be inside than outside. While still healthy, I'm struggling more with weight, borderline hypertension and colds than I did a couple of years ago.

Even though I love and often write about the outdoors, all too often, when it comes to life's routine decisions on a daily basis, I stay inside.

Since we're beginning a new year, this is a good time for me to take a hard look at what I'm doing with my life and consider some changes. Yet it's unlikely that the demands of my work will diminish any time soon.

To get outside more, I'll have to use convenient resources and consciously set aside some time to use them. So my goal will be to take at least 30 minutes each day to do nothing more purposeful than to exercise and enjoy the outdoors – by taking a walk from my home or grabbing an opportunity to walk in the woods or in a park.

My intent is to establish this as a new baseline of daily activity. I will continue to look for opportunities to exercise and do the activities I enjoy such as bicycling, boating, hiking and skiing or snowshoeing.

REI and Futerra claim that more than 1.4 million people and 170 organizations have chosen to "Opt Outside." To learn more and consider whether to join this movement, visit #OptOutside.

Until I stop seeing an enemy of nature when I look at myself in the mirror, I certainly won't tell you what to do. But as for me, I agree with REI and Futerra: It's time to choose.

## **RAFFLE TIME AGAIN:**

You should have received your fifteen raffle tickets with this newsletter. If you did not, please let us know. This year's prizes:  
1<sup>st</sup> Prize: \$200.00 Gift Certificate from Spokes-N-Skis  
2<sup>nd</sup> Prize: 1 night stay in Fairfield Farm B&B Guest Cabin, Spruce Creek.  
3<sup>rd</sup> Prize: \$100.00 Gift Certificate from Hoss's  
4<sup>th</sup> Prize: \$100.00 Sheetz Convenience Store Gift Certificate

- 5<sup>th</sup> Prize: \$100.00 Brush Mountain Running & Outdoors, Inc. Gift Certificate  
 6<sup>th</sup> Prize: Rothrock Outfitters; 1 complete bike tune-up  
 7<sup>th</sup> / 8<sup>th</sup> Prize: Gift Certificates from Allegheny Creamery and Crepes, \$25.00 each  
 9<sup>th</sup> / 10<sup>th</sup> Prize: Gift Certificates from Black Dog Café, \$25.00 each.  
 11<sup>th</sup> Prize: Gift Bag from REI

The prizes were provided this year by, **Spokes-N-Skis, Fairfield Farm B & B, Hoss's, Field and Stream, Rothrock Outfitters, Black Dog Café, Allegheny Creamery and Crepes, and REI.** In the upcoming newsletters we will tell you more about the businesses that are so generously supporting us. We greatly appreciate the support of these businesses and we hope, as you shop throughout the year, that you remember to support those businesses that support Rails to Trails. The drawing will once again take place during the Spring Gathering. Mark your calendar for Sunday, May 6<sup>th</sup>.

The raffle is our major fund raiser, providing a large percentage of our annual operating budget. It is also a way for you to renew your membership. By returning your ticket stubs and money, you extend your membership by one year. This applies to all memberships, even if yours does not expire until January, 2019 for example. By selling the tickets, your expiration date would move to January, 2020. Or, if you do not wish to extend your membership, you may use the ticket sales to give a membership to someone else as a gift.

We understand that not all individuals feel comfortable participating in raffles, let alone fund raisers. If you do not wish to receive tickets, please let us know. If you did receive tickets and do not wish to participate, please accept our apology. You may either return the tickets or destroy them.

We are certainly grateful for every individual's support, either by renewing your membership as it expires, or by participating in this fund raiser. Tickets again this year are \$2.00 apiece. Ticket stubs and checks may be mailed to Rails-to-Trails, PO Box 592, Hollidaysburg, PA 16648. If you should have any questions, please feel free to contact Vickie Brua at [vicbrua@atlanticbb.net](mailto:vicbrua@atlanticbb.net) or Jennifer Barefoot at 814-695-8521, e-mail at [rjsunbrook@verizon.net](mailto:rjsunbrook@verizon.net). Thank you!

## SHARE THE SNOWY RAIL TRAILS:

*By Bob Richers*



With the first winters snow storm in mid-December, I headed to the Bells Gap Trail to cross country ski. More times than not I am the first one to ski on the trail, so I get the honor of breaking the trail. This takes a little more effort, but the return trip is easier on an established track. The fifth or sixth skier has a great time using the broken-in trail. An overnight freeze firms up the trail and the undisturbed track will last a little longer than the rest of the trail when the snow starts to melt.

On arriving at the trailhead, I was pleasantly surprised to discover that two other skiers had already used the trail. On the way up the gap, I met the other skiers returning toward the trailhead. We

stopped and talked a while. The three inches of fresh powder on the sunny day made for a great outing. They also liked using the Lower Trail but mentioned that the dog walkers walked on the ski path which made the track less suitable.

They had gone to the first gate and turned back. I continued on and broke new trail up to the game lands border, stopped for a break at the new pavilion and headed back down the mountain. Low and behold, I passed a man and lady walking a beautiful black lab. To my disappointment, farther down the trail I noticed that one of the walkers took the easier way up and walked on the section of track that I had just made. Instead of a smooth ride back I needed to keep my skis from slipping sideways where foot prints covered the track.

Some who walk do not realize this as a problem, but please, if you are out walking and notice a "ski track trail," walk to the side of the ski tracks. Not only walkers, but those who mountain bike in the snow with fat-tired bikes also damage ski-tracks. Many mountain bikers cut their own trails, but a few do not realize ski tracks are ruined when something other than skis overrun their tracks. There is plenty of room for all to enjoy the snowy rail trails.

## WILD FLOWER WATCH: INVASIVE PLANTS:

*By Bob Richers*



The Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources has a list of Invasive plants found in our State Forest and park lands. Listed are 39 herbs and forbs, 9 trees, 34 shrubs, 7 grasses and a watch list of 25 additional plants.

There are thousands and thousands of non-native plants, animals, insects, fish and even diseases throughout the world. The main engine spreading these species worldwide has been humans. As man learned to travel from town to town, country to country and continent to continent, it was game on.

Most of the non-native introductions do not become invasive. In fact, very few do. Many plants classified as invasive have an advantage over our native species. They may come from a part of the world so far away that no biological controls are available. They may crowd out, or tower over the plants around them. Constant flowering and production of seeds, or even seeds that are light and can greatly disperse by winds can lead to invasiveness. Vigorous root systems or vining is another issue.

Many plants listed by DCNR had well intentioned introductions. Japanese knotweed was lauded by the early railroad industry as a great erosion control plant. The PA Game Commission planted Multiflora Rose for small game shelter habitat.

Some of the plants listed can be welcome additions to your garden if controlled. Everyone has some plant that needs thinned out periodically. Japanese honeysuckle may grow beside a porch of 100 years but if a property is abandoned and grown over it could get out of control. Purple Loosestrife may be a good fit in your flower bed but if you border a lake or a creek it could become invasive.

Basic research of plants that you plant or in some cases arrive on their own can stop invasive issues before they occur. Living in the north in a freeze zone also limits the number of invasive plants that trouble the warmer sections of the country.

To learn more about invasive plants you can visit; [www.dcnr.state.pa.us/forestry/plants/invasiveplants/index.htm](http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/forestry/plants/invasiveplants/index.htm) .

**TREE OF THE MONTH: SHAGBARK HICKORY**

*By Dave Despot*

Hickory trees are members of the genus *Carya*, a word derived from the ancient Greek word Karyon, meaning “nut”. Hickory nuts were an important food source for Native Americans, American settlers and still provide an important food source for wildlife. Hickory trees are unique, long-lived shade trees with bold yellow fall color.

Hickory trees are classified into two broad categories, true hickories and pecan hickories. In Pennsylvania, there can be found three species of true hickory: *Carya ovata* (shagbark hickory), *Carya tomentosa* (mockernut hickory), and *carya glabra* (pignut hickory). Of these true hickories, it seems that *Carya ovata* is the best known because of its unique loose bark characteristics and its edible nut crops. The pecan hickory group has only one species common to Pennsylvania, *Carya cordiformis* (bitternut hickory). The Pecan (*Carya illinoensis*) is included in this group, but it is not commonly found east of Indiana, Kentucky, or western Tennessee.



If we take a closer look at the distinguishing characteristics of shagbark hickory, we find that it is a medium-sized forest tree with a typical mature height of 70 to 80 feet and a diameter of 1 to 2 feet. It can grow much larger in the open, especially on a site with good soil and adequate moisture. Leaves are compound, 7 to 15 inches long, with 5 (occasionally 7) leaflets and fine teeth on the margins. Terminal leaflets are broader than side leaflets, a trait that helps distinguish true hickory trees from pecan hickories, ash, and walnut trees. Shagbark hickory nuts are 1 to 2.5 inches



in diameter, oblong, with thick husks. Twigs are reddish brown with visible lenticels and are sometimes covered with short hairs. The terminal bud is oval with some loose scales; lateral buds are smaller and divergent with generally tight scales. Shagbark hickory is a common

component of central Pennsylvania forests and is often found on well drained bottomland as well as upland sites, often with oak and other hickories.

Hickory trees are known for their wood which is hard, stiff, and shock resistant. This unique combination of characteristics makes it the wood of choice for tool handles, drum sticks, wheel spokes,

and long wearing wood floors. At one time hickory was used to make baseball bats, but was replaced by ash.

**ELECTION RESULTS:**

Elections were held at the January meeting. Board members re-elected for a three year term were; Vickie Brua, Ed Donahoe, Ethan Imhoff and Peggy Goodman. Newly elected to the board is Mike Panek. Nelson Horton after many, many terms on the board, elected to not run again. Nelson, for many years headed and guided our maintenance volunteers and chaired the Safety Committee, doing an outstanding job. Over the past two years, he has turned the reigns of being the Maintenance Coordinator over to Mike Panek (who has since done an outstanding job.) Nelson will still be chairing and overseeing the Safety Committee. We would like to thank Nelson for all of his outstanding years of service and know he will continue on as an active member and volunteer on the trail. Also thank you to these individuals for volunteering their time and energies for three more years. Following the election of Board members, elections were held for the 2018 officers. Elected President: Ethan Imhoff; Vice-President, Karl King; Secretary, Mary Emeigh; Treasurer, Sarah Gonsman; and Sec/Treasurer Jennifer Barefoot. For a full list of board members, visit the website, [rttcpa.org](http://rttcpa.org) .

**MEMBERSHIP FORM**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: (\_\_\_\_)- \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

_____ New Membership	_____ Renewal
_____ Individual	\$15.00
_____ Family	\$20.00
_____ Supporting	\$50.00
_____ Group	\$75.00

I am interested in:

_____ Horses	_____ Hiking
_____ Heritage	_____ Bicycling
_____ Nature Study	_____ Jogging
_____ Other	

I would like to help by volunteering for:

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Make checks payable to:  
 Rails-to-Trails of Central PA Inc.  
 PO Box 592,  
 Hollidaysburg, PA 16648  
[www.rttcpa.org](http://www.rttcpa.org)

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## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Tuesday February 13  
Tuesday March 13<sup>th</sup>  
Tuesday April 10<sup>th</sup>  
Sunday May 6<sup>th</sup>

Monthly Board Meeting, 7 PM at the Grannas Station  
Monthly Board Meeting, 7 PM at the Grannas Station  
Monthly Board Meeting, 7 PM at the Grannas Station  
Spring Gathering 1 PM at the Mt. Etna Trail Head

## KEEP YOUR ADDRESS CURRENT

This newsletter is mailed 3rd Class Bulk Mail. The Post Office will not forward 3rd Class Bulk Mail. If anything about your address changes, Route Number, Street Numbers, or Zip code, the Trail Trekker will not be forwarded to you. Please keep Rails-to-Trails informed of any address changes by using a post office change of address card or dropping us a note at the following address.

**Remember, if your mailing address is Highlighted, your membership is about to expire. Please renew quickly and continue to support Rails-to-Trails. Thank You!**

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