



Volume 27 Issue 5

Rails to Trails of Central PA Inc.

November/December 2022



It's hard to believe another year has gone by. It's our hope that you stayed healthy and were able to get out and enjoy the trail this past year.

REDBANK VALLEY TRAILS

By Bob Richers

We are always looking for new trails to ride our bikes on.



It's always interesting to see how other trails are constructed and operating and hopefully bring innovative ideas back with us to share with our members. We have been watching the Redbank

Valley trails for a while now, but didn't want to ride there until they were completed. This rail trail, which was used for freight service until 2007, is located in western Pennsylvania and was the first trail to receive the Pennsylvania Trail of the Year designation in 2014. It is a good two and a half hour drive from Blair County.

The Redbank Valley Trails are a private trail system just like our Lower Trail. Their website, (www.redbankvalleytrails.org) is really a first-rate publication. The viewer can download maps, lodging, parking and area information. Redbank Creek has numerous kayak launches but would be best when the early season water is higher. Several of the tributaries feeding this creek are stocked trout waters, but Redbank Creek is mostly a warm water fishery due to its open width and sunny

exposure. The website gives the listing for checking water depths.

The main trail is forty-two miles long with a 1% grade. The Sligo Spur is nine miles in length with a 3% grade. The trail goes from Brookville, beside PA Route 36 and ends at the Armstrong Trail beside the Allegheny River. Other trails in the area along the Route 36 corridor are the fifteen mile Mahoning Shadow Trail in the town of Punxsutawney; the nine mile paved Oil Creek State Park Trail just below Titusville PA and the five mile river road in Cook Forest State Park.



The Redbank Valley has a limestone dust surface. The trail surface is rated at grades 1 and 2 but is mostly a smooth grade 1. There are some areas where the 2B stone from the

original ballast has surfaced but these places are fairly compacted. The trail is 12 to 15 feet wide, similar to the Ghost Town Trail west of Dilltown. This narrow rail trail is not open to horse riders. It crosses 18 decked bridges and 7 stone arches. There are also 2 restored tunnels. These curved tunnels are pitch black and require a good light. There are large metal sculptures and interpretive signage along the trail.

Porta johns are spaced along the trail and at most of the trailheads. The New Bethlehem trailhead has no porta-john but there is one at the nearby kayak launch. Restrooms are also located at the nearby library, visitors center and local restaurants. The trail head in Brookville is narrow and a vehicle pulling a trailer with bikes could never turn around there. I needed 2 parking spaces just to pull my Ford 150 pickup truck into a parking space.

If you decide to try out the trails in this part of the state and choose to stay for several days, there are motels along Route I-80 at the Brookville and Clarion exits. After several visits to the Red Bank Valley Trails, driving there on different routes, I believe that the best way to reach these trails would

be taking Route 22 to Ebensburg, route 422 to Kittanning and Route 66 into New Bethlehem, (which is at mile 20 nearly in the middle of the 42 mile trail.

(Photos from: Pennsylvania Great Outdoors Visitors Bureau, 2801 Maplevale Road Brookville, PA 15825
[PHONE: \(814\) 849-5197](tel:(814)849-5197))

DID YOU KNOW...OUR VOLUNTEERS ARE THE GREATEST!

We would like to pass along a note from one of our members and her experience on the trail.



“On October 7, I had ridden my bike from Flowing Spring to Alexandria. Right past Water Street, I got a flat tire. With no spare and my car at Flowing Spring, I didn’t know what to do. Along came Mike Panek and he immediately made some phone calls to get me help. No one was available so he said he would ride his bike back to

Mt. Etna and come pick me up. In the meantime, Perry Smith got a message that someone needed a ride and their bike picked up and he found me waiting at Water Street. He loaded my bike and drove me back to Flowing Spring. I only waited maybe 10 mins when Perry showed up. I just wanted to thank Perry and Mike for helping me out. Everything happened so fast and I was so thankful for their help! Not sure what I would have done without their help! It’s nice to know there are still good people out there to help someone in need!! Thank you to both!”

Theresa Tomlinson

TREE OF THE MONTH: WHITE BIRCH

By Dave Despot



White birch, *Betula papyrifera* is a medium sized tree that can grow to 80 feet tall and spread 30 to 40 feet. It is native to Canada and northern areas of the United States. In central Pennsylvania, which is near the southern edge of its native range, white birch is

found in bottom areas of north facing slopes where temperatures tend to be cooler and the soil is rich and moist.

As its name suggests, bark is a major identification characteristic for white birch. Chalky white to creamy-white outer bark peels off in horizontal strips to expose cinnamon colored under bark. Leaves are 2 to 3 inches long,

about half as wide, somewhat triangular in shape with sharp pointed tips, dark green above with pale green undersides, and attached by long stout petioles. Fall color is yellow. Twigs are smooth to slightly hairy with a reddish-brown hue and prominent lenticels. In comparison with other birches, twigs of white birch are coarse, but overall, the texture of the tree is medium both in leaf and during the winter. The bases of older trees develop bark that is dark in color and marred with furrows.

Wood of white birch is light, tough, close grained and is used for articles turned on a lathe, pulp wood, and firewood. White birch bark is tough and resinous and is used by northern Indians for canoes, shelters, and various utensils. The bark ignites and burns very readily and is often used by campers to start fires. White birch trees were once a common specimen tree in landscapes primarily because of the interesting bark. Bronze birch borers often attack white birch trees especially when the trees are stressed due to high temperatures and drought. In recent years, other birches such as river birch and gray birch have become popular as landscape trees because they are a little more resistant to bronze birch borer.

WILD FLOWER WATCH: PALE AND SPOTTED TOUCH ME NOT

By Bob Richers

One of the more common late summer wildflowers growing along the Lower Trail are the Touch Me Nots also known as Jewel Weed.

The Pale Touch Me Not is the pale-yellow version more common to the trail. The Spotted Touch me Not, which is orange with darker orange spots, is also seen, sometimes even both together. The plants look similar, but the pale is



taller (3’ to 5’ vs. 2’ to 5’), and has slightly larger flowers. They prefer wet and shady environments.

Their leaves are simple, opposite, or whorled but not separated into leaflets. The leaf edges of both have a blade with teeth. Leaves are 1” to 4” long.

The flower is similar in appearance to the Snap Dragon. The pale flower is 1 to ½ inches while the spotted is 1 inch in length. Both are bilaterally symmetrical, common nodding. There are three to five sepals, often resembling petals with one forming a backward nectar bearing petal and a pair of joined petals on each side.

Early spring shoots, (up to six inches), can be boiled for 10 to 15 minutes, in two changes of water and served as a cooked green. **Do not drink the cooking water!** The

summer stems and leaves can be crushed, and the juice can be used to sooth nettle stings, treat poison ivy, and for athletes' foot.

The fruit is a fragile, swollen, elliptical capsule which pops when mature dispersing the seeds. The sensitive triggering of the seeds from the ripe fruit inspired the name; "Touch Me Not"!

JANURARY 10th UPCOMMING ELECTION:

Each year in January, we must elect five members to the Board of Directors. Rails-to-Trails of Central Pa Inc. is managed by 15 elected members in good standing in the corporation. Board members serve a three year commitment with five being elected each year. The Board members whose terms are up this year are: George Foster, Sarah Gonsman, Karl King, Joe Lansberry and Bruce Sheehe.

You may ask, "What does being a Board member entail?" Article III. A. of our by-laws states: "The ability of the Organization to successfully accomplish its purpose as defined in Article II is contingent on the active interest and participation of its Board Members. 1. This entails involvement in the planning, organization and carrying out of scheduled activities throughout the year. 2. Board members are encouraged and expected to attend scheduled meetings on a regular basis." To keep this organization strong and moving forward, it is vital that board members are able to fulfill the two objectives listed above.

If you feel you meet these criteria and are interested, or know someone who is, please consider running for a position on the Board. Do not always assume someone else will do it. The Lower Trail is a GREAT trail but we need committed people to keep the organization strong. To nominate someone for the Board, email Adam Bergstein at nerdstein@gmail.com

FAMILIAR FACES LOST:

We would just like to extend our sympathies to the families and friends of two well-recognized individuals who were always on the Lower Trails, either riding it or volunteering on it. This fall. we lost Tom Harvey and Rodney Lane. Both of these men loved the trail and will be missed by the Rail Trail Family.

CALENDAR CHANGE:

As you can see by this newsletter. there is no Holiday Gathering scheduled. We have also decided to postpone our yearly Hoss's Community Fund Raiser and gathering until March. It seems no matter what date we pick in December.

it has always been BAD weather. We decided to wait and have the fundraiser in March to hopefully have better weather and have a speaker to kick off the spring season, when everyone is starting to plan to get outside after a long winter. More information to follow in the next newsletter.

There will also be no board meeting in December. If there is any business that needs addressed it will be done through a zoom meeting or via email.

SUPPORTING RAILS TO TRAILS IS AS EASY AS; SHOPPING AMAZON.COM.

Please consider using **Amazon Smiles** and **designating Rails To Trails of Central Pennsylvania Inc.** when you make a purchase through Amazon. This will provide our trail organization with a percentage of the purchase at no cost to you. Thanks to all those who have already used this feature.

You can use this quick link <http://smile.amazon.com/ch/25-1605920> to access Amazon Smiles using RTTCPA as donor recipient.

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

January 10th, 2023

Monthly Board Meeting, 7 PM at the Grannas Station

February 14th 2023

Monthly Board Meeting, 7 PM at the Grannas Station

March 14th 2023

Monthly Board Meeting, 7 PM at the Grannas Station

Please check our Calendar of Events page on our website to keep up to date, for other events that may be taking place on the trail hosted by other organizations

KEEP YOUR ADDRESS CURRENT

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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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