



Volume 17 Issue 1

Rails to Trails of Central PA Inc.

January/February 2012

2011 EAGLE SCOUT PROJECTS

By Bob Richers



While watching a Harry Potter weekend movie marathon with my grandkids I can't help but smile as the Hogwarts students seem to grow up right before my eyes. Working with a Scouting program has the same effect. You welcome the 11 year old new scout and years later witness a well-rounded young man accepting his Eagle Scout award.

When a scout begins his final quest toward Eagle Scout he is required to perform a project. The scout should come up with the service project on his own although sometimes a troop leader or a civic organization will drop a helpful hint.

The candidate should demonstrate leadership, a skill learned throughout the scouting process, and manage the project. A "scout is thrifty" so the scout raises funds and donations for his project. He plans workdays and recruits manpower from his troop, family and friends. The project must first be approved by the organization that is being served as well as by the district Eagle Scout review board.

It was my pleasure to sign off on 3 completed Eagle Scout service projects this year. Two of the projects were on the Lower Trail and one was along the Bells Gap Trail.

Nick Centar from troop 30 repaired one of the old camp ground pavilions on the trail above the Grannas Station. These pavilions were identified as possible project sites during a troop hike along the trail. Most of the plywood truss plates had been gnawed away by porcupines and these shelters had become unstable. One already collapsed under earlier heavy winter snow.

Nick and company replaced all the truss plates with metal plates and painted them to match the wood. The total structure was then re-stained with a weather sealant. The shelter is somewhat off the trail so 9 tons of shale was spread over a weed barrier leading into and under the pavilion. The path into the area received a border of railroad ties. We supplied a new picnic table for the shelter.

Matt Keefe from troop 30 also worked on a pavilion. Matt discovered that the four posts holding up his shelter needed replaced so the decision was made to tear down the pavilion and replace it with a new structure. This approach required more funding. The finished project is tremendous and includes a garden area using the old posts and a sheltered nature display.

Mark Cassarly from troop 49 completed his Eagle Scout project on the Bells Gap Trail. Mark and crew constructed and stained forty Blue Bird houses and placed them at 100 yard distances beginning at the Roots Crossing trailhead to the border with the State Game Lands.

The amazing part of Mark's story is that he transferred into Troop 49 a few months shy of his sixteenth birthday as a second class scout and with a lot of hard work he will receive his Eagle Scout Badge on the day before he turns 18. He also serves as troop senior patrol leader.

To these three scouts I would like to first compliment them and their families for choosing scouting and secondly would like to close with a hearty, "Job well done!"

ELECTION RESULTS:

Elections were held at the January meeting for the 5 open Board of Directors seats. Elected for a three year term were: Vicki Brua, Ed Donahoe, Nelson Horton, Ethan Imhoff, and Stan Kotala. Elections were then held for the officers for the 2012 year. Ethan Imhoff - President, Karl King - Vice President, Mary Emeigh - Secretary, Sarah Gonsman - Treasurer and Jennifer Barefoot -Assistant Secretary/Treasurer.

WILDFLOWER OF THE MONTH: QUEEN ANNE'S LACE

By Bob Richers



During the growing season I try to list wild flowers that are blooming at about the same time as the newsletter goes out. In the winter months, I like to write about flowers that are more common.

Queen Anne's Lace, also called wild carrot, birds nest or bishops lace, is native to Europe and later naturalized to the

United States where it is listed as a noxious weed. I can only assume that a British Queen Anne was a fan of needle work and thus the plant was named. The blower in bloom does resemble lace and the tiny red speck in the middle of the plant, that helps attack insects, looks like a drop of blood left by a needle prick. The dried flower after blooming curls up to resemble a small bird's nest.

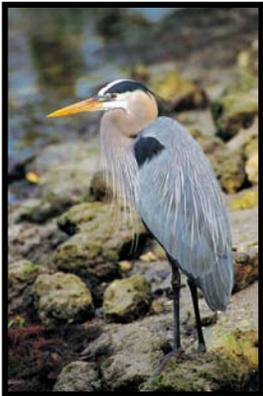
The wild carrot, root of the Queen Anne's Lace, is edible while young but becomes quite woody with age. One note of caution is that this plant closely resembles the Poison Hemlock. On occasion the leaves can cause Dermatitis so use gloves when handling and wash after cutting. One neat thing about the plant is that the cut flowers will change color when kept in water tinted with food coloring.

The plant was used in centuries past, with limited success, as a contraceptive. There also is some use as a dye. When planted near a tomato garden there are documented cases of increased production, although who really needs any more! It can also help lettuce by supplying shade and holding soil moisture. This wildflower is quite common to the area.

HERONS IN THE WINTER:

By Marcus Schneck

A Great Blue Heron poised statue-still at the edge of a small meadow stream edged with spreading ice is among the coldest scenes of the Pennsylvania winter.



Our Keystone State is well within the bird's year-round residency range, but the large, fish and frog eating predator seems so much a creature of the warmer months, a time when its prey would seem to be much more available.

However, the Pulitzer Prize-winning, American poet Mary

Oliver didn't get it right when she conjectured that the title birds in her poem, "Herons in Winter in the Frozen Marsh," at nothing, and nothing good could come of that. They mired in nature, and starving."

On closer examination, the winter landscape also turns out to be an abundant pantry for the heron. Studies of the bird's feeding habits have repeatedly found voles and mice, which roam meadows and stream banks throughout the winter, to be a substantial part of the heron diet. I've also witnessed a heron or two take a few stabs at muskrats, particularly those held in traps. In those attacks, the base of the skull at the back of the head seemed to have been the primary target. The heron attacks were fatal to the muskrats.

Like many bird species, the heron is anatomically adapted to survival in a winter landscape. The legs of the birds employ a temperature control system known as counter-current heat exchange. Veins (toward the heart) and arteries (away from the heart) are intertwined in those avian legs, allowing for the cold blood leaving the feet in the veins to be warmed by the

body-heated blood in the arteries. The design preserves much of the bird's body heat. In addition, the bird's legs are mostly bone and tendon, with limited amounts of muscle to require less blood circulation and few nerve endings to even register the cold. And all of that "antifreeze" design is covered by large, hard scales.

Hérons also are among those families of birds with an abundance of insulating down and specialized plumage known as powder down. Those feathers, which grow throughout the bird's life, break down at their tips into a powdery material that ornithologists believe plays a part in both insulating the bird and waterproofing its outer feathers.

So, in addition to providing a welcomed bit of blue to the often bleak landscape of winter, the Great Blue Heron is well adapted to survival in that landscape.

(This was reprinted from the December issue of Valley Rural Electric's "PENNlines".)

MEMORIALS:

The first newsletter of every year Rails to Trails acknowledges the memorials and honorariums given the previous year. In 2011 memorials were given in memory of Roy E. Peterson Jr. We would like to thank those who contributed and extend our condolences to the family and friends of Mr. Peterson.

RAFFLE

Again this year, we will we will be holding our primary fundraiser, the raffle. The tickets will be mailed out in the next newsletter. 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. You may email Vickie Brua at vicbrua@atlanticbb.net or phone 695-0736 and leave a message. We have tried to keep track of those not wanting tickets in the past and will not send out to those individuals. Also if you have not received tickets in the past and wish to this year, please also let us know at the contact information above. Our prize providers this year are **Spokes & Skies** of Lakemont; **Rothrock Outfitters** of Huntingdon, **Hoss's Steak & Sea House**, and **Moosewood Laser Creations** of Belleville. As in years past, the raffle drawing will take place during the **Spring Gathering** which will be held this year on **Sunday, May 6th**.

Grills??? As mentioned above, we will again have our Spring Gathering on May 6th but we do have an obstacle to make the day a success. Mary and Warren Emeigh have always graciously donated the use of their gas grills to cook all of the meat. The problem is that the 20 year old grills have died. We are looking for a solution; first to see if any other members would be willing to bring their grills to do the cooking. Another idea is to rent two grills for the day. Hiring someone or a company to cook for the day has also been suggested. At this time we are just putting this problem out to the membership to see if anyone is willing to lend their grill for the day. You may contact Mary Emeigh at mesunbrook@verizon.net or phone 695-3697.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS:

Saturday, April 14— **Timberdoodles at Canoe Creek State Park.** The park has a variety of wetlands and old fields that provide ideal habitat for woodcocks. Observe the fascinating and unique flight of the timberdoodle. Meet at Pavilion 1 at 7:30 p.m. For more information, contact trip leader Dr. Stan Kotala at 814 946-8840 or at ccwiba@keyconn.net.



Sunday, April 22 — **SUNDAY TRILLIUM HIKE ON THE LOWER TRAIL:** Come join Deb Tencer to see the repeat performance of thousands of red and yellow trilliums and Dutchman's-breeches that cover the hillside along a section of the Lower Trail. Meet at the Water Street flea market at 11 a.m. The hike is only 2 miles and is quite easy. Afterward, please join us to go for pizza! Contact Deb at naturehikergal@gmail.com for more info.

Sunday, May 6 - **Rails-to-Trails Spring Gathering** - Join us for our annual picnic and drawing for prizes listed on the fund raiser raffle tickets. Bring a dish to share with others. *Always a good time and plenty of food!* Meet at noon at the Mt. Etna Trailhead. Contact Jennifer Barefoot 814-695-8521

Sunday, May 6 — **SPRING MUSHROOM WALK ALONG THE LOWER TRAIL:** Join Bill Russell, author of *Field Guide to the Wild Mushrooms of Pennsylvania and the Mid-Atlantic*, along with Karen Croyle. The Lower Trail is heavily collected for morels, but many other interesting mushrooms are fruiting at this time of year. We might find a few morels as well. The 4-mile hike will take about 3 hours. Meet at the Water Street entrance to the Lower Trail (near the intersection of U.S. Rt. 22 and Pa. Rt. 453) at noon. Contact Juniata Valley Audubon Field Trips Committee Chair Deb Tencer at naturehikergal@gmail.com for more info.

Saturday, May 12 — **Annual Terry Wentz Memorial Hike.** Four-mile moderately easy hike on Moore's Hill Trail honoring former Canoe Creek State Park manager, the late Terry Wentz, who served on the Juniata Valley Audubon and Rails-to-Trails boards of directors for more than a decade. Meet at the Canoe Creek State Park Environmental Education Center at 2 p.m. For more information, contact trip leader Dr. Stan Kotala at 814 946-8840 or at ccwiba@keyconn.net.

May 19, Saturday — **SPRING WILDFLOWER WALK AT BELL'S GAP RUN:** Join Marcia Bonta for a walk in State Gameland 108 at Bell's Gap Run to observe spring wildflowers. Meet in the parking lot for the Bells Gap Trail at 10 a.m. and then drive halfway up the mountain to a parking lot on the left. The walk is a gentle climb that leads past a variety of wildflowers on the left cliffs as well as some rare ferns. It's also a good place for spotting spring warblers and other birds while looking down at large trees and the stream. Bring a trail lunch and a beverage to enjoy at the top of the hollow. For more info contact Marcia at

marciabonta@hotmail.com.

Sunday, June 10 — **MOUNTAIN LAUREL HIKE IN BRUSH MOUNTAIN WOODLANDS:** Join Deb Tencer to hike The Nature Conservancy's property known as the Brush Mountain Woodlands to admire the massive amounts of Mountain Laurel, along with other flora and fauna specific to this dry, rocky area. Meet at Panera Bread in Logantown Centre at 11 a.m. to carpool. For more info, contact Deb at naturehikergal@gmail.com.

Wednesday June 13th – **JOHN HEALY MEMORIAL RACE:** Race begins at 6 PM at the Williamsburg Trailhead. For more information contact Phil Sukenik at psukenik@hosscorp.com

If you'd like to schedule an event or if you have questions about an event, please call Stan Kotala, Rails to Trails Event Coordinator at 814-946-8840 or email at ccwiba@keyconn.net

WINTER: just a thought to think about

By Verna M. Kelly

Snowflakes are one of nature's most fragile things, but just look what they do when they stick together.

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:

Make checks payable to:

Rails-to-Trails of Central PA Inc.
PO Box 592, Hollidaysburg, PA 16648
(814)-832-2400
www.rttcpa.org

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Tuesday February 14th

Tuesday March 13th

Tuesday April 10th

Saturday April 14th

Sunday May 6th

Monthly Board Meeting, 7 PM at the First United Methodist Church in Hollidaysburg.

Monthly Board Meeting, 7 PM at the First United Methodist Church in Hollidaysburg.

Monthly Board Meeting, 7 PM at the First United Methodist Church in Hollidaysburg.

Timberdoodles Hike, 7:30 PM at Canoe Creek State Park, Pavilion 1.

Spring Gathering, noon at the Mt. Etna Trailhead.

More details on all events on page 3 of the *Trekker*

All are invited to the monthly meetings.

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!

Rails-to-Trails of Central Pennsylvania, Inc.

Post Office Box 592

Hollidaysburg, PA 16648-0592

814--832-2400

www.rttcpa.org



RAILS-TO-TRAILS, INC.
OF CENTRAL PENNSYLVANIA
P.O. Box 592
Hollidaysburg, PA 16648

Nonprofit Organization
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
Altoona, PA 16601
PERMIT NO. 66

Or Current Resident.