



HOLIDAY GATHERING:



We have worked hard throughout the year, mowing, cutting trees, attending meetings, problem solving. The list could go on and on, but it is time to take a break. We invite you to our annual

Holiday Gathering, to be held at **7 PM on Tuesday December 9th**, with holiday treats to eat. Jane Sheffield will be our guest speaker talking about Allegheny Ridge and the PA Main Line Canal Greenway projects. Rails to Trails has worked together with Jane on a number of projects and much of what is done through the Allegheny Ridge organization impacts not only us but rail trails and greenways throughout the state. We hope you can come join us for a relaxing evening, please feel free to bring a friend. The gathering will be held at the Hoss's Corporate Offices in Duncansville behind Marzoni's. Please use the **REAR ENTRANCE** at the back of the building.

HOSS'S COMMUNITY FUNDRAISER:



December 9th is not only the Holiday Gathering, but also the day Rails to Trails is again partnering with Hoss's Community Fundraising Program. All you have to do is clip the coupon from Page 3 of the *Trekker*

and go to Hoss's on Patchway Drive in Duncansville. Present your coupon when ordering lunch or dinner and Hoss's will donate 20% of the cost of your group's meals to Rails to Trails. Now how easy is that? You get a great meal and help out Rails to Trails at the same time.

You can eat at any time during the day. If you plan to come to the Holiday Gathering, just allow enough time to eat and then come over to the Corporate Offices, (which are located just behind Marzoni's restaurant.) We will be using the REAR entrance at the back of the building.

GREAT NEWS:

In the last newsletter we told you about the movement to make a connection between the Lower Trail and Canoe Creek State Park. The great news is that Rails to Trails has been awarded a \$585,000. grant from the Multimodal Transportation Program to cover a portion of the estimated \$900,000 cost of a Route 22 underpass. PennDOT has committed to paying \$355,000 toward the project which includes the Canoe Creek Intersection project. This will allow the trail to more safely tie into the State Park.

Timing of this grant could not have been better, for it allows the design and construction to work into PennDOT's upgrading plans for Route 22. There is much yet to be worked out but if all goes well, construction of this connection will take place in the 2017 construction season.

The good news continues as we would like to thank the Lower Trust. Rails to Trails received nearly \$40,000 from the Trust. Rails to Trails will be using these funds for some required matches for other grants and toward expenses related to extending the trail into Hollidaysburg as well as some needed trail repair/resurfacing on the eastern portion of the trail. We are **VERY** grateful for the continued support of the Lower Family.

We also would like to thank Explore Altoona for a \$2000 County Tourism Grant to purchase a TrafX trail counter system. This system will allow us to keep accurate counts on trail usage, which will be very beneficial when applying for grants and providing accurate information to the Visitors Bureau and County. We thank Explore Altoona for their continued support and help in marketing the trail to all visitors to our area.

TRAIL CONSTRUCTION:

If you have been on the trail in the past couple of weeks you will have been able to experience recent trail



improvements, including the re-decking of two bridges, one near



Williamsburg and the western bridge at Mt. Etna. An additional section of the trail has been paved, now making almost 5 miles of paved trail is now completed. A second pavilion has been erected at Mt. Etna and the parking areas at Covedale and Mt. Etna have been resurfaced. George S. Hann and Son, the company that completed this work are to be commended on a job well done.

The photos were taken by member Rick Hess during the construction. One showing one of the bridges prior to being re-decked, one showing



how a very creative workman found a way back to his vehicle after moving a piece of construction equipment to the work area.....you just bring your bike to work and strap it onto the piece of equipment. The other photo is of the almost complete second pavilion.

The trail construction has now come to a halt for the season, but will continue in the spring. Finally after many years, (10 if you are counting) we have all "our ducks in line" (we think.) In the spring of 2015, the repair of the Waterstreet Wall, damaged in Hurricane Ivan in 2004, should be done. George S. Hann and Son received the bid and plan to begin work in the spring. Once this project is started it should not take long to finish.

BIRD HOUSE MAINTENANCE:

By Bob Richers

The Lower Trail has numerous bird houses in place, especially along the upper 6 miles. The Bells Gap Trail also has 2 miles of bird boxes from the Roots Crossing trailhead up to the border of the game lands. At one time I also had Bluebird boxes throughout old farm fields and Wood duck boxes around a beaver dam on a relative's property in Turkey Valley.

The problem with bird houses is they require seasonal maintenance. I usually don't fuss with much in-season monitoring because right now, there is enough room for Bluebirds, Barn Swallows and even Wrens. A fall coat of sealer or paint, especially on the roof, will help the bird houses last much longer. When winter breaks, clean out the boxes, repair as needed and add a handful of cedar chips. Mounting screws should be backed out if they start counter sinking into the back of the box.

Cleaning out bird houses is a lot like a box of chocolates; you never know what you'll get! Each spring I find 10 to 20 boxes with Deer Mice smugly nesting awaiting warmer weather. When we have a snowy winter, the mouse numbers are down because nesting under the snow is preferred. The last several years, on one section of the trail by the scout dam, some of the houses were stuffed with green leaves and some hickory nuts; Deer Mice, chipmunks??? Well this past spring when I opened a box, what looked like a really big Deer Mouse was looking back at me. When it jumped free I noticed a flap of skin from the front to rear legs. It was a Flying Squirrel, the first one that I've seen up close.

I have also cleaned out lots of wasp and hornet nests. Along Bells Gap, there was a box completely filled with a paper wasp nest. A 3/8" gap at the front of the bird house allowed safely knocking the stinging insect nest down with a plastic paint stirring stick during nesting season. One spring I found a Wood Duck box filled with black walnut husks. The following year the box had chunks of squirrel and mouse hides, (walnut's revenge???)

Another summer when walking past a Wood Duck box, a Green Heron popped out and flew off. Occasionally Black Snakes will also check out bird houses. Half of the fun of bird house trails is getting out with nature in all four seasons and finding the unexpected.

WILD FLOWER OF THE MONTH:

Vipers Bugloss

By Bob Richers



One of the prettiest blue flowers found along many of our rail trails is Vipers Bugloss, which is also called Blueweed. The Plant is found in waste areas with plenty of sun light. It is a member of the Borage family.

Bugloss flowers from May thru September and grows from 1' to 3' in height. It is a biennial or monocarpic perennial plant with rough, hairy, 4" to 5" lanceolate leaves. The stem and occasionally the leaves, are spotted with red. The 1" flowers first open as rose colored but then turn to brilliant blue. Numerous curved and spiked flowers are found along most of the plant. The stamens are red which gives the blossoms a showy contrast.

Viper's is a native of Europe and Asia but was introduced to North America. It has naturalized to most of the country and is considered invasive in Washington State.

Folk medicine lists Blueweed as an expellant of poisons and snakebites. This was due to the resemblance of the spotted stem to snakes and the seed pods are also shaped like snake heads. The seeds actually do contain a fatty acid composition and the plant is sometimes grown as an oil crop.

It really is a shame that a plant of this beauty has a name more fitting to a rock band. Let's hope its name was an old world interpretation.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS:

The following messages were posted on the bulletin board at Mt. Etna.

Undated. "I'm about to ride this whole dang trail because I'm a man. . . by the way I saw a bear. J.R."

7/15/2014 "What a lovely trail! Saw red fox, birds, and lots of rabbits. I call Mt. Etna to Alfarata - The Bunny Trail. Cheryl."

8/16/2014 "Rode 15 miles on this pristine and historic trail. The nicest Rails-to-Trails I have biked. Level and clean - NO TRASH. Just wonderful & classy. A real escape from life (busy) and so close. Talked to some fisherman that caught some bass. Dave from Phil."

8/17/2014 "Alexandria to Williamsburg 4 ice cream and his ice cream wagon wasn't there! How could he do this to me?"

8/24/2014 "Today is our 18th wedding anniversary. We got married at this bridge. What a beautiful wedding! Herm and Karen Arnold." (Someone else added, "Congrats - we just had our 39th.")

Undated. "What a beautiful trail! Lots of nature everywhere. Very clean and natural. Wonderful - and so close! Keep up the good work."

9/16/2014 "Mother bear and 2 cubs above (Mt.) Etna."

9/20/2014 "Cathy and Mike from Pittsburgh. Doing our yearly ritual. Vacation at Wildwood and Cape May, NJ. Then stop at the beautiful Lower Trail to ride our bikes and stop at the ice cream stand in Williamsburg. Enjoy what you have and live each day with a Happy Heart."

Undated. "WOW! - is all I could say when I started riding on the (new) black top! Betty"

PHOTO FROM YESTERYEAR:



Member Jerry Hymes sent this photo of the train station that was located at Mt. Etna. The old school house in the background of the picture still stands at Mt. Etna. If you have any old photos from along the rail trail and would like to share

them please email us a copy and we will put it in the newsletter.

JANUARY ELECTIONS:



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: Vickie Brua, Valerie Burnett, Ed Donahoe, Nelson Horton, and Ethan Imhoff. This year Valerie Burnett, decided not to seek another 3 year term on the Board.

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, contact Norma Horton at 814-669-4612, or email her at nhorton1446@yahoo.com.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS:

Tuesday December 9th Hoss's Community Fundraiser for Rails to Trails.

Tuesday December 9th Holliday Gathering, 7 PM at the Hoss's Corporate Office, Rear Entrance. Program by Jane Sheffield speaking on the Allegheny Ridge and PA Main Line Canal Greenways Program. All are invited.

HAPPY HOLIDAYS

As we approach the Holiday Season and the close of another year, it is our hope that you take the time to enjoy your family and loved ones. Take the time to get out and enjoy all the beautiful sights and natural wonders we have around us. And most of all, have a safe and wonderful holiday.

Warmest Holiday Wishes from the Rails to Trails Family.

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:

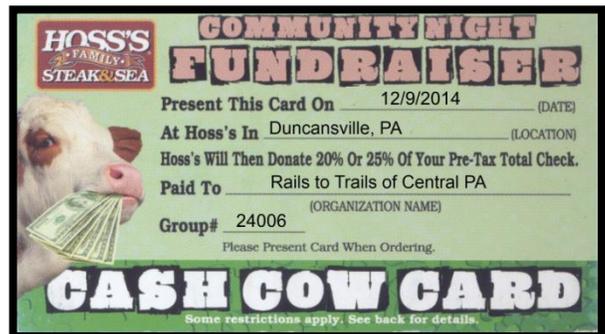
_____ Horses _____ Hiking
 _____ Heritage _____ Bicycling
 _____ Nature Study _____ Jogging
 _____ Other

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

HOSS'S COMMUNITY FUNDRAISER COUPON





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.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Tuesday December 9 th	Hoss's Community Program Fund Raiser, Duncansville Hoss's.
Tuesday December 9 th	Holiday Gathering, 7 PM Hoss's Corporate Office.
Tuesday January 13 th	Monthly Board Meeting and yearly elections, 7 PM at the Grannas Station.
Tuesday February 19 th	Monthly Board Meeting, 7 PM at the Grannas Station

More details on all events on page 3 of the *Trekker* and on our Web site at www.RTTCPA.org
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!

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