



Volume 21 Issue 5

Rails to Trails of Central PA Inc.

September October 2016

WORK ALONG THE LOWER TRAIL: ASH TREE REMOVAL



Due to the destruction of the Ash Trees by the Emerald Ash Borer Beetle, Rails to Trails of Central Pennsylvania will be having the Ash Trees removed along the entire 17 ½ miles of the Lower Trail this October. This project will take place from October 3rd with completion by October 28th of this year.

This project will be done by CASP (Conservative Anabaptist Service Program) under the supervision of Ernest Ebersole of Lofty Heights Tree Care.

This is a very large undertaking that had to be done for the safety of the trail and all of its users. During this project, some parts of the trail may be temporarily closed when taking down some trees. We ask that if you are using the trail this October, know that you may encounter some delays, or may even need to begin your ride at a different trail head. The plan is to have the tree removal begin at the Alfarata trailhead and work towards the Flowing Spring trail head. We hope to keep the progress of this project updated on our website and Facebook page to allow the trail users to know what areas will be affected each week.

Earlier this year, Canoe Creek State Park also had to remove well over 100 ash trees in their public use areas alone. As everyone is aware, Rails to Trails is a private organization that survives by the donations of its membership. Rails to Trails could not have begun to afford the cutting of all of these trees yet they need to be removed. When we were approached by CASP it was a true gift. This is a Service Program done by the Mennonite Community. Rails to Trails is greatly indebted to the Conservative Anabaptist Service Program and would like to thank them for providing this service to the trail and its users.

TREE OF THE MONTH: ASH TREES AND THE EMERALD ASH BORER:

Ash trees found in central Pennsylvania are primarily of two species, white ash (*Fraxinus americana*) and green ash (*Fraxinus pennsylvanica*). The leaves of ash trees are pinnately compound with leaflets 2.5 to 5 inches long and half as wide ranging from slightly toothed to entire. Ash trees have stout twigs with visible lenticels and large crescent shaped leaf scars. Winter buds have 2 or 3 visible scales. Terminal buds are much

larger than lateral buds. Fruit are single seeded winged samaras, borne in drooping clusters that are persistent on the tree. Once you become familiar with the look of the twig, the buds, and the leaf scars, there is little that you can confuse these trees with.

Now, identifying the differences between green ash and white ash is a little more challenging. Some authors suggest that most white ash leaves have smooth surfaces on the petioles while most green ash trees have downy petioles. The problem is the word "most". What if the tree you are looking at is one of the exceptions? The two characteristics that seem to be most consistent for identification are the shape of the leaf scars and the condition of the surface of twigs. White ash trees have a crescent shaped leaf scar with a notch that partially surrounds the bud. Green ash leaf scars are also crescent shaped, but lack the notch – the bud sits just above the flat side of the crescent. When looking at the twig surface, white ash will have a bloom that peels and forms loose, membranous strips. Green ash twigs are thinner and less knobby than white ash and do not peel or exfoliate their surface layer.

In homeopathy, ash trees have been used for treatment of gout and rheumatism. The tree essence represents a sense of strength and flexibility. No wonder the wood is used to make tool handles and baseball bats!



In recent years, ash trees have been seriously impacted by the emerald ash borer, an invasive insect which is native to Asia and was first detected in Michigan. The beetle lays eggs on the bark; the eggs quickly hatch into larva that bore into the inner bark and cambium and move around the tree consuming and destroying the area just under the bark that is vital for tree growth and survival. This damage may occur undetected for up to three years before the tree begins to show signs of dieback and sprouting. Sprouts produced along the trunk and major branches are a survival mechanism of the tree as it tries to replace the leaves lost as its extremities die back. Eventually, with continued attack by the beetles over several seasons, trees run out of energy and die. Millions of trees in North America have been killed by the emerald ash borer. So, sadly we add ash to the list of trees that have been affected by introduced pests, and realize that we will likely have one less tree species to enjoy as we head outdoors.

PICTURE an EXHIBITION of ART and NATURE:

By Dave Hurst, 2016 Hurst Media Works

Most of the songbirds are gone. Daylight is just beginning to appear around 6:30 a.m. and leaving by 7:30 p.m. My office air-conditioner may still run during the day, but my bedroom unit no longer is needed at night.

We are in the final week of summer for 2016. Autumn has arrived.



Soon, God's hand will paint our ridges with vivid splashes of scarlet and orange and yellow. Each tree will become a gallery, each leaf a masterpiece, on display for a limited time only.

For a few short weeks, our normal drives will be anything but commonplace. Around just about any street corner or country-lane curve, views may suddenly grab your attention; sights will make you want to stop for a photograph or a moment of pure appreciation.

With so much natural artistry on display, it shouldn't be surprising that this has become an ideal time of year for fine-arts events as well. They complement each other!

Consider that you might not care to travel the rural roads of an area to visit artists' studios in February. But during October, when the fall foliage is near its peak, the drive adds to the experience.

At this time of year people might also be tempted to drive to more distant places than at other times of the year. These are opportunities to break out of routines and take journeys that can be as enjoyable as the destinations.

With these thoughts weaving the canvas, allow me to create a tableau of places where the arts can be experienced engagingly during this picturesque time of the year.

First, see a small, somewhat isolated point in the heart of the Alleghenies that probably wouldn't be on most arts lists – unless you are familiar with Confluence because you bicycle the Great Allegheny Passage or spend time at Yough Lake. But its Confluence Creative Arts Center is alive with arts.

Two Tuesdays a month groups gather for quilting and fabric arts. Last month there was a plein air "Paint Out" where artists fanned out to paint whatever inspired them. Now "fiddlehead" and community music jams are beginning again for the fall. Periodically unusual art forms are explored. Food and friendly people are constants. Keep an eye on its calendar at ConfluenceCreativeArtsCenter.org.

Now arc over the ridges and coves to Huntingdon, where the business community is collaborating with Juniata College and local artists to create "Art Walks" from 5:00 to 8:00 p.m. on the third Thursday of each month.

Businesses will host a wide variety of artists – including musicians, fine artists and dancers – in a free-of-charge open house format that invites people to visit participating locations in whatever order they desire. Visit HuntingdonLandmarks.org to see each month's line-up.

Tracing down Tussey Mountain brings us to Bedford's 26th annual Quilt Show and Sale which takes place October 1-9 at the Bedford County Historical Society. Visit during the two weekends embraced by those dates and you'll also be able to experience Bedford's Fall Foliage Festival (which boasts hundreds of arts and fine-craft vendors). BedfordPaHistory.com.

Then follow a bold line across the tableau's middle section with an October 2 drive to Greensburg and the Westmoreland Museum of American Art during a "Free Admission Sunday." What makes that day more special is that it will be the final day for an exhibition on American folk art that includes portraits, landscapes, sculptures, household objects and furniture created by self-taught or minimally schooled artists of the 19th century. TheWestmoreland.org.

Finally, find Indiana County on October 15 or 16, for the Potters Studio Tour. Another self-guided, free-of-charge tour, this one enables you to meet as many as 18 potters, demonstrating and presenting their works at nine locations. PottersTour.com.

Step back and admire this picture for what it is: cultural art framed by natural artistry. And very soon now, the exhibition will be opening.

WILD FLOWER WATCH: ARROWHEAD:

By Bob Richers



Arrowhead is a perennial shallow aquatic plant which belongs to the Water Plantain Family. It is widely distributed worldwide but in some areas is considered invasive. (Australia of course!), other names for the plant include: duck-potato, Indian Potato and Wapato.

Arrowhead is a frequent emergent and can form dense colonies in any very wet soil. They form along river curves, beside ponds and lakes. The strong root system helps it survive changes in water levels and hold tight in wave action. This plant has broad dark green leaves 3" to 14" long and 3" to 10" across and is really shaped more like a spear than an arrow.

Despite the name Duck Potato, ducks rarely consume the tubers although they will eat the seeds. Beavers, Porcupines and Muskrats will eat the complete plant. The tubers can be collected in the fall when some can be found floating and more can be harvested using a pitchfork. They taste like potatoes and chestnuts and can be eaten raw or cooked for 15 minutes by roasting, frying or boiling. When ground they produce flour.

Each leaf of the Arrowhead is supported by individual stems. The flowers are divided into female and male flowers on the same plant. The female flower has 3 white petals 1/2" long with short curved green sepals, the male is similar but contains yellow

stamens. The female flowers produce a 3/4" fruit bur that change to dark brown as it matures.

Arrowhead makes a nice addition to a yard pond and does well in clay flower pots near to the surface. Locally I have seen Arrowhead growing along the West Penn Trails and have seen major colonies in Maryland, Virginia and Florida.

HOW IMPORTANT IS YOUR HEAD? :

By Jennifer Barefoot

If you are using chemicals you should wear safety glasses. If you are using a chain saw you should wear protective chaps, safety glasses, and ear protection. If you are driving a car you should be wearing your seat belt. There are so many things we put on our bodies to protect them from injury, but how many of people put on a helmet when they ride their bicycle?

Most cyclists who ride on the road do wear helmets; most all organized rides require riders to wear a helmet, but many people who ride the rail trails, or just are going out around their neighborhood, or their children who are riding "just on the driveway or around the yard" do not wear a helmet. Well, as the title asks: How important is your head?

Let me tell you a short story that began on Saturday, August 27th. It was a beautiful morning when I decided to go for just a short bike ride. I have ridden my bike on the road for over the last 26 years. I am no racer, but consider myself to be a safe rider. Well, the last thing I remember was riding at the edge of the road in front of Frankstown Elementary School; the next thing I remember is opening my eyes and looking up at my husband looking down at me. I hurt but could not really remember anything. My husband said I had been riding my bike and wrecked. I knew that could not be true for I knew my husband had gone to work that morning so how could he be looking down at me telling me this? What I did not realize is that I had been out of it long enough for the people who witnessed the accident to call 911, I did have identification on me, so when they had said my name, one of individuals recognized it and knew my husband and called him at work. My bike tire apparently had hit a stone or a groove in the pavement and turned my front wheel. I went over the handle bars landing on my head first; shoulder/arm second then the rest of my body. I spent most of the rest of the day at UPMC hospital trauma unit. Thankfully I am FINE. Road rash is clearing up and sore muscles are healing. But what I want to say to all of you is that WITHOUT my helmet, I know this story would be different. That helmet saved my life. Now you may say I only ride on trails; how bad could I wreck? I know of another individual who is a founding member of Rails to Trails, who 16 years ago wrecked on a rail trail doing just what I did, going over the handlebars and landing on his head. He also ended up in the hospital...and without his helmet the story I am sure would have a different outcome. You never know where you will land; it could be grass, it could be a rock, or a stump. A helmet will protect you.

When I first began riding and got my helmet I didn't know what to get. Bill Taffe, then owner of Spokes n Skis asked me "How

much is your head worth?" There are many helmets to choose from: different colors, sizes, cheap to very expensive, mountain biking versus road etc. I have even seen them for sale super cheap at flea markets. Your head/life is worth more than a second hand helmet! Helmets sold at flea markets have been used. The rule is....if your helmet has hit the ground, get a new helmet. Also get a **properly fitting helmet**.



The best rule of thumb to getting a proper helmet is, go to your local bike store and get fitted. I know here in Altoona, Bryan or Troy at Spokes n Skis will properly fit you with the correct size and fit. They will explain the differences in the construction of different helmets and answer any questions you may have. Any of the local bike shops will help you. I had a good helmet that is now dented and scratched but all in one piece. Many people looking at it would say it is still fine to wear....but it was not. Before I even had the doctor's okay to ride again, I had gotten a new helmet.

Please for your sake as well as your families....ALWAYS RIDE WITH A HELMET.

MEMBERSHIP FORM

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: (____)-_____

E-mail: _____

New Membership Renewal

<input type="checkbox"/> Individual	\$15.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Family	\$20.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Supporting	\$50.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Group	\$75.00

I am interested in:

<input type="checkbox"/> Horses	<input type="checkbox"/> Hiking
<input type="checkbox"/> Heritage	<input type="checkbox"/> Bicycling
<input type="checkbox"/> Nature Study	<input type="checkbox"/> Jogging
<input type="checkbox"/> 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

www.rtcpa.org



RAILS-TO-TRAILS, INC.
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P.O. Box 592
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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Tuesday October 11th
Tuesday November 8th

Monthly Board Meeting, 7 PM at the Grannas Station
Monthly Board Meeting 7 PM at the Grannas Station

TRAIL ETIQUETTE

With many people using the trail, we must all remember we do not have eyes in the back of our heads. No one likes to be startled. So if you are riding your bike and are approaching a slower rider, walkers or horseback riders, PLEASE give notice. All that needs to be said is: "passing on your left" or just "coming up behind you".

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
www.rttcpa.org