



Volume 26 Issue 3

Rails to Trails of Central PA Inc.

April/May 2021

RAFFLE RESULTS:



Thanks to Covid-19 and social distancing there was no Spring Gathering again this year, but the raffle drawing did take place at 1 PM on Sunday May 2nd.

The winners this year were as follows:

- 1st prize:** James Hamilton of Neelyton, PA, Spokes-N-Skis Gift Certificate
2nd prize: Joe Doyle of Altoona, Fairfield Farm B & B 1 night stay
3rd prize: Ken Graham of Altoona, Gift Bag from REI
4th prize: Pete Casselberry of Williamsburg, Hoss's Gift Certificate
5th prize: Ed Perry of Hollidaysburg, Sheetz Gift Certificate
6th prize: Theresa Tomilinson Altoona, Pa, Amazon Gift Certificate
7th prize: Kathleen Taylor PA Furnace, Pa, Amazon Gift Certificate
8th prize: Steve Myers Martinsburg PA, Black Dog Café Gift Certificate
9th prize: Rose Ciambotti Hollidaysburg, Pa, Black Dog Café Gift Certificate
10th prize: Gerry Newhouse Hollidaysburg, Pa, ACE Hardware Gift Certificate
11th prize: Dianne Billotte Hollidaysburg, Pa. ACE Hardware Gift Certificate
12th prize: Ken Brenneman Williamsburg, Pa, ACE Hardware Gift Certificate
13th prize: Martha Wenger Ephrata, Pa, ACE Hardware Gift Certificate
14th prize: Laura Burke Hollidaysburg PA, ACE Hardware Gift Certificate

We must apologize that there has been a delay in getting some of the prizes mailed out to the winners. This was a result of the Covid virus and places being closed. Please accept our apology for this delay.

Top ticket sales person...**Tom Fisher**. Tom again sold the most tickets by selling 330 tickets. We owe not only Tom but all our Rail Trail members who helped to make this year's raffle a success. This raffle is what makes up most of our yearly operating budget. Also a very big thank you to Vickie Brua. She has

handled the entire raffle process from the distribution to collection and updating of all the membership information. It is no easy task and she does a fantastic job.

With those thank-you's said, the raffle would not have happened without the generosity of **Spokes-N-Skis, Hoss's, Fairfield Farm Guest Cabin, REI, Black Dog Café' and ACE Hardware.**

These businesses have been very supportive of Rails to Trails. We hope that when you are out shopping that you return the favor and support these businesses.

We received a few phone calls hoping that the decision to cancel the Spring Gathering had changed as Covid restrictions have been easing a bit. As we had stated, we were airing on the side of caution. We are still hoping to have a picnic gathering in the late summer or fall of this year. We will keep you posted via the newsletter, website or Face Book. Thanks for your understanding.

NEW FENCE

THANKS TO OUR VOLUNTEERS AND THE BOROUGH OF WILLIAMSBURG, new split rail fencing has been installed along Riverside Park and the trail.



vandalism.

As many had noticed over the past few years the fence was in need of repair. Some of the repairs were needed due to age and weathering, while others were due to



support of the town to work as partners in the upkeep of the trail. We hope that that willingness will spread to the other Boroughs and Townships that the trail goes through.

With the help of Williamsburg Borough donating their equipment and some manpower to work alongside of our dedicated volunteers replacing the fencing. It is great to have the

The new fence looks GREAT, we hope it stays that way for many, many years to come.

TREE OF THE MONTH: STRIPED MAPLE

By Dave Despot



Striped maple (*Acer pensylvanicum*) is a small tree with a short trunk and ascending branches that commonly grows to 15 or 20 feet (4 to 8 inches in diameter) and may reach 30 feet under ideal growing conditions.

This species is not of major

importance as a timber or landscape tree, but is worth discussing because under the right conditions it can be quite common and the Latin name of this species represents the name of our state. The native range of the species goes from Nova Scotia west to Minnesota and south into New England and the Great Lakes area. In the higher elevations of the Appalachian Mountains, striped maple grows all the way south into Georgia. Cool, damp, rocky woods are the preferred habitat. I have seen large areas populated with striped maple on the rocky slopes along route 26 near Stone Valley.

Leaves are 3 lobed, 5 to 7 inches long, nearly as wide, finely toothed on the margins, bright yellow green above and paler beneath. Seeds are typical maple samaras with divergent wings, borne in long drooping clusters. Twigs are smooth with few lenticels, red to greenish, and have brown pith. Leaf scars are crescent shaped and almost completely encircle the twig. As stems mature, the reddish green bark becomes marked with longitudinal white stripes, visible in all seasons. These stripes are an excellent identification characteristic and the source of the common name striped maple.

Striped maple does not produce wood of commercial value. It is browsed by white tailed deer and in the northern part of its range, by moose, resulting in the common name moosewood. This species is also sometimes referred to as goosefoot maple because of the similarity of the shape of the leaf to a goose's foot.

WILD FLOWER OF THE MONTH: PURPLE DEAD NETTLE



While tilling and fertilizing my vegetable garden when the weather turned warmer in early March, I was amazed at the early emergence of numerous weeds. Most of these weeds had tiny flowers, and curiosity got the best of me, so I looked up some of their names.

Purple Dead Nettle is the flower that I will report on today. Lamium (dead-nettles), is a genus of 40 to 50 flowering plants in the family of Lamiaceae. They are all herbaceous plants native to Europe, Asia, and northern Africa. Some of these families have

become quite successful weeds as I can attest of the Purple Dead Nettle in my garden.

The purple flower of this plant is only about the size of a pencil's sharpened point and shaped like a tiny snap dragon. This common weed is a member of the Mint family. The spade shaped leaves of Purple Dead Nettle are about 3/4" to 1/4" on the tapered top of the plant. The flowers dwarf compared to the leaves.

The first break after winter finds this plant growing and blooming in full force and continuing through fall. It will quickly carpet an area. It likes, but is not limited to, full sun light. It thrives in gardens, soil heaps, pastures, waste lands, rubbish heaps, and even in arable lands.

In the early spring, 2" to 4" of the nettle tip is edible. Usages are cooked green, soup, or tea. The top young shoots are excellent when simmered for 10 to 15 minutes in just enough water to cover and serve with butter and lemon. Use in soups or stew. For tea, boil shoots or leaves for several minutes, strain, and add lemon and sugar. The leaves contain A and C vitamins. **Caution:** wear gloves when handling the leaves and never use plants from lands that have been treated with insecticides or herbicides. Enjoy!

DEER MOUSE:

By Bob Richers



One of the interesting discoveries when maintaining bird houses is the unexpected wildlife encountered. From the mid 1980's thru 2000 I was fortunate to access my in-laws' property near Canoe Creek State Park that contained excellent Blue Bird habitat. The boxes that I installed were almost 90% successful.

When cleaning the houses at the end of winter, I encountered many deer mice nests. Most contained 2 or 3 squatters, but one time, 5 mice exited while cleaning out the old nests. I started to take a spare bucket with a lid along, half filled with bedding material and managed to catch several mice as they leaped from the opened houses. I took the mice home and set up an aquarium with a crushed charcoal base, cedar chips, a corner with bedding, and bowls of water and bird seed. To cover the top, I used a window screen held in place with several bricks.

My kids enjoyed watching the mice, but our cats acted like they had cable TV. They never left the room! After a month, the odor would get noticeable so the aquarium would go on a road trip to return the mice to the wilds.

Deer mice are a nocturnal animal, so most people never see them. They live 1.5 to an amazing 8 years and are 3 to 4 inches in length. They have coloration like a white-tailed deer, thus the name. Almost any habitat will suit this mouse, but open fields and brush is optimal. Unlike the white footed mouse, which lives a solitary life, the deer mouse gathers in groups, especially in cold weather. In winter, in order to keep warm, the mice huddle together in groups of up to 10 and reduce the temperature of their bodies by undergoing daily torpor.

The little beastly is an important seed disperser and in higher elevations can be a major prey species. They communicate through chemical signals, visual posturing and shrieks, squeaks, trills, and sharp buzzing. Peak breeding occurs during the warmer months. Litters of 4 to 6 are born after a 4 week gestation period. The youngsters become independent in 25 to 35 days.

I find more mice when cleaning bird boxes after a winter with little snowfall. They are excellent climbers and usually pack the box with bedding and food. They are not overly clean and leave quite a mess behind. A handful of cedar chips refreshes the cleaned box for the coming birds' nests.

With the onset of Lime disease this century, and 30% of tested deer mice now testing positive, I leave these little rodents in the wild. But with the invention of the laser light my cats have found other things to chase. But like the mice in an aquarium, they do not seem to ever catch anything!

TRAIL TOWN MARKET BACK AGAIN THIS YEAR:



As summer approaches and you're heading to the trail, you may wonder...." what might be happening in Williamsburg?" Once again this year, beginning on Memorial Day Saturday (May 29th), the borough will be hosting the **TRAIL TOWN MARKET**. This will happen every Saturday throughout the summer from 9 AM until Noon. As of yet, the list of vendors is still being worked on.

With the hopes of the pandemic numbers declining they hope this year to have more crafters, farmers market stuff (home grown produce), baked goods, and flowers as well as organizations selling their wares,. So you may want to plan your ride so you can visit the market as well.

NOTICE A DIFFERENCE?



If you have been down to the Williamsburg Trail Head you may have noticed a change in the Porta-Pottie. It is now handicapped accessible. This is a start in collaboration with the town of Williamsburg, Penn State and the trail. Williamsburg, and Penn State, are looking into the possibilities of making parts of the Lower Trail an accessible destination.

This will certainly take a while, but the partnership and the possibilities are exciting. We will keep you posted as this project continues. It is in its infancy, but we hope to see it mature into something great. As for the new addition, we would like to thank Wertz's for suppling us with the Handicapped porta-pottie at almost the same cost as the old one.

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.

MEMBERSHIP FORM

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_____ New Membership _____ Renewal

- _____ Individual \$15.00
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I am interested in:

- _____ Horses _____ Hiking
- _____ Heritage _____ Bicycling
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Make checks payable to:

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Due to the COVID-19 VIRUS RESTRICTIONS THERE WILL BE NO MONTHLY BOARD MEETINGS. MEETINGS ARE BEING HELD VIA ZOOM or HOPEFULLY IF THE WEATHER COOPERATES OUT SIDE AT ONE OF THE TRAILHEADS. (We will keep you updated)

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
814-317-9728
www.rttcpa.org