

BULLETIN

SPRING/SUMMER 2024



BENEFICIAL INSECTS ARE GETTING READY TO WAKE UP FOR SPRING. AND YOU CAN HELP THEM.

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BULLETIN

— SPRING / SUMMER 2024 —

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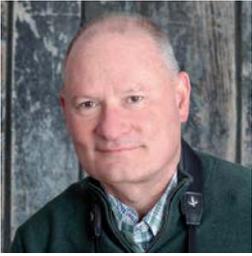
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*The Promethea Silkmoth (*Callosamia promethea*) caterpillar overwinters by reinforcing a leaf petiole with silk, then spinning its cocoon within the leaf. All winter long, the cocoon remains on the plant until the right conditions of Spring occur—and the adult emerges.*



The Bulletin is published four times a year by Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania, 614 Dorseyville Road, Pittsburgh PA 15238-1618. Address correspondence to Rachel Handel, Editor. The editor reserves the right to edit or reject all copy. The Bulletin is received as a membership benefit. Nonmember subscriptions are \$9.00 per year. For membership, subscriptions, or address change, contact ASWP. Printed on recycled paper.





THIS AUDUBON VIEW

A MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

I've previously shared ASWP's carbon neutrality and net-zero energy goals, and our organization's plans to convert all of our facilities and equipment to electric. I'm doing a similar switch-over at my house—recently installing an induction stove when our gas one needed to be replaced. As someone who loves to cook, and has always had a gas stove, this was a big change. Would I like electric cooking? Would my existing pans work? Was the hype around induction cooking real? Spurred on by reports about indoor air pollution caused by gas burners, I turned to electric. There would be no chance of leaking gas, and without a flame, there was no chance of accidentally starting a fire. Induction stoves are more energy efficient, heat up very quickly, and have very precise temperature control. Because the burners don't actually get hot—just the pans via magnetic induction—they are safer and also easier to clean. But they are not inexpensive, and a stove is something you usually live with for 10-20 years. When I got my electric car, I had the opportunity to test drive several before making the commitment. Wouldn't it be great if there was a way to test induction cooking before making that commitment?!

Well, our good friends at West Penn Power Sustainable Energy Fund are helping to make that possible for you. When they funded the solar array now being installed at Succop Nature Park, they also provided funds to convert the stove top there to induction—and for us to purchase three mobile induction units that we could lend out to the public. These units, which plug in to regular 110v outlets, are not quite as powerful as the 220v ones that power full-sized units, but they work the same way. We have these available at Beechwood Farms Nature Reserve, Buffalo Creek Nature Park, and Succop Nature Park for you to pick up and “test drive” for a week at your home. Just give us a call and we will schedule a time to pick one up.

If you're in the market for a new stove, I encourage you to consider induction. It's efficient, safe, and an easy transition from gas or traditional electric. And yes, a full pot of water for pasta is at a rolling boiling in less than three minutes!

—Jim

OUR RESERVES, NATIVE PLANT NURSERY, AND NATURE STORES

BEECHWOOD FARMS NATURE RESERVE

614 Dorseyville Road in Fox Chapel, Pittsburgh, PA 15238
Audubon Nature Store & Native Plant Nursery / *Dogs not permitted on trails*

BUFFALO CREEK NATURE PARK

154 Monroe Road, Sarver, PA 16055
Audubon Nature Store / Dogs on leash are welcome

SUCCOP NATURE PARK

185 W. Airport Road in Penn Township, Butler, PA 16002
Audubon Nature Store / Dogs on leash are welcome

TODD NATURE RESERVE

367 Kepple Road, Sarver, PA 16055
No restrooms or other facilities / Dogs not permitted on trails

Accessibility Information: For accessibility needs or questions about any of our sites, please contact Brian Shema at (412) 963-6100 or at bshema@aswp.org. For accessibility needs or questions about any of our programs, please contact Chris Kubiak at (412) 963-6100 or ckubiak@aswp.org. All other questions regarding accessibility or inclusion can be directed to Jim Bonner at (412) 963-6100 or jbonner@aswp.org.

Carolina Chickadee



DELAY SPRING CLEAN-UP

TO SUPPORT NATIVE INSECTS

Native insects are having a harder-than-usual time of it due to climate change and people's inner drives to clean up their yards as soon as there's a sign of Spring in the air. It's been a warm winter in Pittsburgh, and that means you might be thinking about grabbing the rake and cleaning up your flowerbeds or leftover leaves. Don't! Native insects use these areas to survive the winter (cold or warm) and rely on everything from leaf litter to the hollow, dried-out stems of native plants to provide shelter until temperatures are consistently above 50 degrees.

Warmer temperatures also give invasive species a better chance of survival, which makes it all the more important to do everything we can to support our native bees and bugs. The most helpful thing that people can do to support native insects is to incorporate native plants into their gardens.

APRIL AND MAY

Avoid the urge to start cleaning up leaves left over from the fall; there are beneficial insects hiding in there!

Participate in "No Mow May" by holding off on cutting your grass until mid- or late-May. This gives pollinators the opportunity to visit dandelions and other flowers as they wait for summer's flowers to appear.

Avoid using chemicals on your lawn and garden areas, because they can harm native species.

Choose native plants when you are adding plants to your gardens. Milkweed is a great choice because it makes a beautiful flower and is the only plant that supports Monarch Butterflies.

When you do begin clean-up in late May, consider allocating a spot in your yard for the yard waste. This is environmentally friendly and also continues to provide new habitat for insects.



*Promethea Silkmoth
Caterpillar*

These plants support birds, butterflies, and beneficial insects (and they'll be available starting in May at our Native Plant Nursery at Beechwood Farms Nature Reserve).

But perhaps the next best way to support valuable bugs is to step away from your rake. Yes, by holding off on yard clean up, you'll keep beneficial bees and other "friendly" insects in their safe overwintering locations. Waiting until May to remove the plant material that accumulated over the fall and winter allows more insects the opportunity to emerge renewed and refreshed for another season—while maintaining the natural balance in our region.

WARMER WINTERS: THE BUG IMPACT

To understand why insects choose to overwinter in leaf litter, beneath snow, or in plant stems, it's important to know how their bodies work. For many insects, death via freezing has more to do with the formation of ice crystals on the insect's body than exposure to low temperatures. The ice crystals form and expand quickly, causing the insect's cells to burst and damage organs. To avoid this type of freezing, insects such as Monarch Butterflies migrate and overwinter elsewhere. Some bugs are freeze tolerant and can produce ice-nucleating proteins that control the freezing process. Still others can actually keep their bodies from freezing with special carbohydrates called cryoprotectants that lower the freezing point of the body.

How do warmer winters impact these processes? For the bugs that stay here, they may start getting signals earlier in the season to emerge from their overwintering spots. The hazards? It could turn cold again and food sources are limited. When a native insect becomes active too early in the season, it risks using up the fat stores that would have originally helped to keep it alive until food was available.

Early pollinators, like bumble bee queens, may emerge before early spring flowers and starve if there are no nectar and pollen resources available.

Invasive insects experience benefits from warmer winters. The Hemlock Woolly Adelgid produces wax that keeps it from freezing in the winter. When warmer weather begins earlier in the season, the bug can be active for longer periods. That gives it more time to feed on hemlocks, leading to the eventual death of the tree.

JUNE AND JULY

When trees and plants are leafed out, it can be easier to identify them. Look for invasive species and remove them.

Spotted Lanternflies are particularly attracted to Tree of Heaven. Now is the time to remove this tree from your property to reduce options for the invasive bugs to congregate and lay egg masses.

Plan your gardens to support native pollinators and birds. Choose native plants!

Mow your grass high to allow insects, toads, and other animals to thrive in the ground below. This also allows plants to form longer roots which reduces the amount of water needed.

Better yet—turn part of your yard into a native meadow! No mowing required.

THE TICK EFFECT

Ticks are a problem year-round. Even when it's cold outside, ticks are around and there's the possibility that they will attach to a host. During snowy weather, ticks can remain beneath the snow layer, which provides insulation and allows them to survive. But this past winter wasn't exactly snowy—so what does that mean for insects like ticks?

According to the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, there are studies showing that tick numbers don't necessarily decrease because of prolonged exposure to extremely cold weather. Instead, they're more adversely impacted by frequent temperature swings.

Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania recommends that, no matter the season, people use caution when hiking in areas that could have ticks. Tuck your pant legs into your socks, use a tick repellent, and always do a tick check when your hike is over.

This goes for pets, too! Be sure that your pet has not brought ticks back home by carefully searching your pet's fur and ears for ticks. Unfortunately, ticks appear to be here to stay. Whether we have a cold snap or a warm winter overall, ticks are something that we need to be vigilant about.

TIPS FOR SPRING CLEAN-UP

Wear gloves, long pants, and a long-sleeved shirt when cleaning up leaf litter.

Ticks often lie in wait on invasive species like barberry. These bushes, once popular at nurseries, are no longer permitted to be sold because they are invasive and they are known to harbor ticks. Remove the bushes to reduce tick numbers in your yard.

Consider adding a mulch barrier around your yard. Ticks don't seem to like to cross over hot, barren areas and this may help to lessen the numbers in your yard.

Bumblebee

LANTERNFLIES: EXPERT SURVIVORS

Spotted Lanternflies, which are an invasive species, seemed to be everywhere in southwestern Pennsylvania last year. These insects do not bite, sting, or cause rashes, and are not harmful to most plants. They feed on plant sap. One of their favorites is Tree of Heaven—an invasive plant species in North America that's native to the same area as the Spotted Lanternfly. Removing Tree of Heaven may reduce the amount of Spotted Lanternfly congregating on your property and the nuisance they cause. Identification keys and management options for Tree of Heaven may be found on the Pennsylvania State University Extension website or by consulting a local professional.

In the fall, Spotted Lanternfly lay sub-zero-tolerant egg masses that overwinter on tree trunks and other vertical surfaces. These egg masses look like mud, and the best thing you can do when you see them is to remove the mass and squish the eggs.

Should you encounter an egg mass, use a plastic paint scraper, an ice scraper, or even an old credit card to remove the egg mass. If this is on a tree, be careful not to injure the tree's bark. Then use the card to squish all of the eggs that are in the egg mass. Dispose of the mass in a plastic bag, in case some of the eggs have survived. Audubon recommends utilizing a plastic bag or container that you'd be throwing in the trash anyway (something that cannot be recycled) like a bread bag.

In May, the eggs will begin to hatch and we'll see the now-familiar black-spotted first instar nymphs.

Interestingly, some people mistake these for ticks (but upon inspection, they look quite different as ticks don't have white spots). They evolve into a red-spotted nymph, then a flying adult. It's difficult to predict what their numbers will be like this year, or if the warmer-than-usual winter will cause the eggs to hatch earlier in the springtime.

Like ticks, it seems these insects won't be going away anytime soon. Since their appearance in 2013, Spotted Lanternflies have spread throughout the mid-Atlantic region, even up into Massachusetts, where winters tend to be colder and more harsh than ours. The egg masses are able to withstand very cold weather, allowing the species to survive year-to-year.

LANTERNFLY AWARENESS

What's that black and white spotted insect? There's a good chance that it's a Spotted Lanternfly nymph. See it? Squish it. As Spring progresses and turns to summer, the nymphs will take on a red color. Squish those, too. Squish them all.

In March and April, check your yard for egg masses. These may be found on tree trunks, fence posts, and pretty much any vertical surface including bricks and siding. Scrape the egg mass, destroy the eggs and dispose of it.



Audubon's summer camps get kids into nature. No screens, no devices. Build friendships, make memories, and connect with the outdoors.

SUMMER IS A TIME TO EXPLORE, HAVE FUN—AND LEARN ALONG THE WAY!

Camps take place at Beechwood Farms Nature Reserve (Fox Chapel), Succop Nature Park (Butler), and Buffalo Creek Nature Park (Sarver). Register today at www.aswp.org or by calling (412) 963-6100.

www.aswp.org



SPRING/ SUMMER

PROGRAM SCHEDULE



Tufted
Titmouse

REGISTER FOR PROGRAMS AT ASWP.ORG OR CALL (412) 963-6100

Events take place at Beechwood Farms Nature Reserve (BFNR), Succop Nature Park (SNP), Todd Nature Reserve (TNR), Buffalo Creek Nature Park (BCNP), or online via Zoom. Select programs take place at Renziehausen (Renzie) Park, Eden Park Boulevard off of Walnut Street, McKeesport, PA 15132; and Freeport Community Park, 115 Community Park Road, Freeport, PA 16229.

SPECIAL EVENTS

Sweetest Season Pancake Breakfast

Sunday, April 7: Seatings at 10am, 11:30am, 1pm / BCNP
Sunday, April 14: Seatings at 10am, 11:30am, 1pm / SNP

Celebrate the Sweetest Season and its most famous product—pure, maple syrup! Enjoy a pancake breakfast complete with sausage, fruit and, of course, real maple syrup! Then get crafty with a maple leaf stamping project. Spaces are limited; registration required. \$12 member, \$15 nonmember; under 3 are free.

Native Plant Nursery Opening Day Sale

Saturday, May 11, 9am–5pm / BFNR

Native plants attract and support birds, butterflies, and beneficial insects—and they're beautiful, too! During our opening day sale, we'll have a wide selection of true western Pennsylvania native perennials, shrubs, and trees available—and our staff will be on hand to help you choose the right native plants for your yard. An extra 10% discount will be offered—that's 20% off for ASWP members and 10% off for non-members. Can't make it on the sale date? Native plants will be available for sale at the Beechwood Nature Store through October.

Spring Eco-Market

Saturday, May 25, 10am–4pm / BFNR

Get ready to enjoy the warmer months as you shop nature-themed items from vendors whose work is made from recycled and sustainable materials. We'll also feature family-friendly activities including hikes and face-painting!

Mini Birding Camp For Adults

Wednesday–Friday, June 5–7, 8am–12pm

Summer camps aren't just for kids! During this 3-day camp for adults, you'll gain lasting knowledge of and appreciation for the birds in our region.

Develop birding skills in the field by observing species alongside our expert guides and Master Birder graduates. Included are visits to Buffalo Creek Nature Park (June 5), Moraine State Park (June 6), and Harrison Hills (June 7). \$100 member, \$140 nonmember.

Picnics in the Park

Thursdays: June 13, July 11, August 8, September 12
6:30–8:30pm / SNP

Pack a picnic and join us for our annual FREE summer concert series. There are tables and seating under the pavilion, or bring a blanket and spread out on the lawn as you enjoy the beauty of the grounds and some great local talent! June: Brandon Rae Music, July: Washboard Tony and Rockin' Rob, August: Max Schang Band, September: Hawthorne Project.

Stream Exploration Days*

Friday, August 9 and Friday, August 16 / BCNP
Morning Session: 10am–12pm or Afternoon Session: 1–3pm

Cool off and connect with nature as you learn about streams and how to keep our local waterways healthy. Explore Little Buffalo Creek, search for macroinvertebrates, and learn about watersheds and their ecology. Be prepared to get wet: water shoes are required and you may wish to pack a towel and/or change of clothes. Register in advance; children must be accompanied by an adult. Free.

BIRDING + NATURE HIKES

Birds & More Naturalist Led Morning Walks

BCNP: Every Tuesday at 9am; Free

BFNR: Every Wednesday and Sunday at 9am; Free

SNP: Every Thursday 9am; Free

TNR: Every Friday at 9am (starting first Friday of April); Free

*Renzie Park**: First Friday of the month at 9am; Free*

Freeport Community Park: First Friday of the month at 9am (starting first Friday in April). Meet at the parking lot in front of Laube Hall. Free.*

Birds and Bogs: Pine Swamp Natural Area

Saturday, April 27, 12–3pm / Pine Swamp Natural Area

Visit two naturally occurring bogs including a rare raised bog. We will observe plants and animals that can tolerate the wet, acidic conditions around these wetland and look at the avian fauna home in Pine Swamp. Bring your water-resistant boots and binoculars to venture into this mysterious realm. \$6 member, \$10 nonmember.

Spring Migratory Bird Hikes

Saturday, May 11, 8–10am / BCNP

Saturday, May 11, 8–10am / BFNR

Sunday, May 12, 8–10am / SNP

Spring is here and the birds know it. Join us for a naturalist-led hike where we'll look for birds that are making their annual journeys north for the summer—including warblers, thrushes, tanagers, vireos, and orioles. Free.

Moraine State Park Bird Walk

Saturday, May 18, 8–11am / Moraine State Park

Join us at Moraine State Park as we bird during the height of spring migration. We will have the opportunities to observe migrating warblers, vireos, waterfowl and other interesting birds. We will meet in the parking lot at McDaniel's Boat Launch and bird several locations at Moraine. Bring your optics, water, and a snack and dress for the weather. Registration required. Email Chris Kubiak at ckubiak@aswp.org for more details. \$6 member; \$10 nonmember.

Invasive Species Walk**

Saturday, June 22, 10–11:30am / Renzie Park Senior Center

Invasive species are introduced, non-native plants or animals that can severely degrade our local habitats. During this outdoor program, we will walk around Renzie Park to observe and discuss real world examples of invasive species and their impacts. We'll also make suggestions on how to combat them with native plant replacement strategies. Free.

NATURAL HISTORY: ONLINE SERIES

Pollinators in the Woods?*

Tuesday, April 9, 7–8:30pm / Online

Did you know that there are over 4,000 different wild bee species in the United States? Most are solitary, don't live in hives, and don't even make honey. The wild, native pollinators have long evolutionary relationships with our beloved wildflowers. Join Audubon and Pollinator Conservation Specialist Kass Urban-Mead from The Xerces Society for an adventure exploring how wild bees use the woods, from the leafy forest floor to the tippy top of the canopy. Free.

Wildlife Biology and Today's Tech

Wednesday, April 10, 7–8:30pm / Online

The study of wildlife is ever-evolving. Advancements in technology including drones, remote acoustics, and cameras have led to some amazing research and discoveries regarding wildlife. Join us online as we look at some of the research being done by wildlife biologists and how their work is helping conservation efforts around the world. Free.

Poisonous Pennsylvania

Wednesday, April 17, 7–8:30pm / Online

Is Poison Ivy really poisonous? Are there really venomous snakes in our state? Learn about the poisonous, venomous, and irritating animals and plants that share Pennsylvania with us. Free.

Evolutionary Anachronisms

Tuesday, May 14, 7–8:30pm / Online

Just a few thousand years ago, most of our native megafauna went extinct. Before that time, plants had been evolving to adapt to these mighty creatures. We can still see these physical adaptations present in plants today—learn to observe them on your next hike. Free.

Biography of Charles Darwin

Wednesday, June 12, 7–8:30pm / Online

Darwin's theory underpins modern biology, but who was Charles Darwin—the man? And how did he arrive at his famous thesis? Learn more about the inner workings of Charles Darwin during this free, online program. Free.

The Spotted Lanternfly

Thursday, July 18, 7–8:30pm / Online

It's been 10 years since the invasive Spotted Lanternfly arrived in Pennsylvania. Today, it's found in numerous local counties. In addition to damaging trees and affecting quality of life, it's a huge threat to the agriculture industry. Learn about this pest's ecology, how to identify the lanternfly, and how you can help to stop its spread. Free.

Common Nighthawk: Not So Common Anymore

Thursday, August 15, 7–8:30pm / Online

Nighthawks have declined substantially in Western PA over the last 30 years. Learn about their ecology and amazing migration from North America to South America through new research using tracking technology. Free.

NATIVE PLANTS

Native Gardens: Solutions for Small Spaces

Saturday, April 6, 10–11:30am / Online

Small garden spaces do not mean you have to give up habitat gardening. Many native plants that support wildlife are perfect for small gardens, window boxes and containers. This program will explore garden design concepts and native plants that will support a range of wildlife throughout the season in less than 5' of growing space. Free.

NATIVE PLANTS

Celebrate Native Species Day***

Thursday, May 16, 12–4 pm / BFNR

May 16 is Native Species Day in Pennsylvania! Visit the Native Plant Nursery at Beechwood to learn about the importance of native plants and pollinators in our local ecosystems. Make a native plant seed ball to take home or hike the trails and toss your seed ball directly in our meadow! Free.

Supporting Pollinators with Native Plants***

Saturday, June 15, 10am–12pm / BFNR

Saturday, June 15, 2–4pm / SNP

Saturday, June 22, 10am–12pm / BCNP

Get set for pollinator week! Discover fascinating survival strategies plants use to lure insects that are critical for pollination. And learn how to support these species with a native plant garden. Each participant will take home seeds and seedlings to grow their own native pollinator garden. Free.

Native Plants for Long Tongue Bees***

Saturday, July 27, 11am–12:30pm / Online

Native bees are critical for pollinating many of our wildflowers, favorite garden plants, and food. This program focuses on native plants and landscape concepts that will support native pollinators. Free.

Bird Friendly Plants for Fall***

Saturday, August 17, 11am–12:30pm / Online

Native plants in your home landscape support birds during fall migration and overwintering. We will look at bird feeding strategies as well as landscape concepts and specific plants that will provide critical resources for birds in the months ahead. Free.

BACKYARD HABITAT LUNCH + LEARN VIRTUAL SERIES

Spring Invasive Plant ID

Wednesday, May 29, 12–1pm / Online

Spring is a great time to get a head start on improving habitat by managing invasive species. Join us as we explore some of the invasive plants that are commonly found in western PA. Learn how to identify invasive plants, avoid confusion between native look-alikes, and some of the physical control methods you can use to control their spread.

Hidden Gems of the Urban Wilderness

Wednesday, July 17, 12–1pm / Online

What's that yellow flower growing in the sidewalk crack or that tall plant in the ditch with all those butterflies flying nearby? Join us for a program where we will discuss native plants that can thrive in urban environments and are often overlooked as important. We will learn how to identify the plants and why they are crucial to the pollinators and wildlife that call our cities home.

KIDS + PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS

Fledglings Preschool Activities: Ages 3–5

Tuesdays: April 9, May 14, June 11, July 9, August 13 / SNP

Wednesdays: April 10, May 8, June 12, July 10, August 14 / BCNP

Thursdays: April 11, May 9, June 13, July 11, August 8 / BFNR

All programs run 10–11:15am

Give your 3–5 year old a head start on a lifetime of loving the outdoors. Fledglings programs incorporate stories, a walk, and activities to introduce new and fun nature themes to young participants. Themes—April: Spring Peepers; May: Dandelion Seed; June: You Little Stinker; July: Lost Ladybug; August: Dragonfly Jewels. Parent or caregiver must be present. \$4 member child; \$6 nonmember child. Accompanying adult is free.

DON'T FORGET TO REGISTER FOR SUMMER CAMPS!

Offered at Beechwood Farms Nature Reserve, Succop Nature Park, and Buffalo Creek Nature Park. Scholarships are available!

MAKE A DIFFERENCE: CITIZEN SCIENCE

Through citizen science, members of the general public collect data related to the natural world. This large amount of data helps scientists to better understand trends in the populations and lives of birds, animals, and the environment as a whole.

Summer Nights and Fireflies

Thursday, June 13**, 8–10 pm / McKeesport Regional History & Heritage Center

Friday, June 28, 8–10 pm / BCNP

Saturday, June 29, 8–10 pm / BFNR

Sunday, June 30, 8–10 pm / SNP

Did you know that some fireflies can synchronize their flashes? Or that there are over 15 different species of fireflies in Pennsylvania—some that trick different fireflies and lure them to become an evening snack? Learn about our state insect and its interesting life, as well as how to count fireflies in your own backyard. We will start with a presentation then go outside to observe and count them as night falls. Free.

Monarchs & Milkweed

Saturday, July 13, 10–11:30am / BCNP and BFNR

Sunday, July 14, 2–4pm / SNP

Milkweed is a critically important source of Monarch Butterfly habitat and food. In this program, you'll learn to identify all life stages of Monarchs in the field. We'll also discuss Monarch conservation challenges, how participants can help by planting milkweed in their own backyards, and how to volunteer for the Monarch Larva Monitoring Project. Free.

Native Pollinators

Saturday, August 24, 10–11:30am / BCNP and BFNR
Saturday, August 25, 2–4pm / SNP

Pollinators play a key role in the development of over 150 food crops in the United States, but scientists have identified long-term declines in pollinator population trends, including our native bumble bees. Learn about these native pollinators and how to help them, including a primer on Bumble Bee Watch. Free.

HANDS-ON + OUTDOORS 101

Succop Nature Park Tree Tour

Saturday, April 20, 10–11:30am / SNP

Succop Nature Park Boasts over 95 species of trees! Walk with us as we visit and identify over 50 species of them. Free for ASWP members, \$5 per nonmember.

HIKING + BIKING 101 SERIES

Audubon has partnered with experienced local outdoors professionals Joe Triebsch and Megan Caplan to connect people with the many recreational opportunities in the Buffalo Creek Watershed.

Hiking Basics: Preparation

Saturday, April 20, 1–3 pm / BCNP

This class, designed for those new to hiking, will focus on hiking comfort and safety including footwear, clothing, daypacks, and other essentials. Information about local hiking areas will also be discussed. Free for members, \$5 per non-member.

Hiking Basics: Navigation

Sunday, May 5, 2–4 pm / BCNP

Learn the basic map and compass skills you need to orient yourself to true north. Pinpoint your location, then utilize the map and compass to begin your navigation. Hiking apps will also be discussed. Note: This class is limited to 12 participants. Free for members, \$5 per non-member.

Prepare Yourself for Rail-to-Trails Biking

Thursday, May 23, 6:30–8:30pm / BCNP

Western Pennsylvania has miles of bike trails and in this clinic, you'll learn how to prepare for Spring and Summer bike rides on Rails-to-Trails. Explore gear and clothing and get tips on how to physically get ready for those longer rides. Hear about the best trails for your goals and even the right type of bike to use. There will be no biking riding in this program. Free for members, \$5 per non-member.

Geocaching

Saturday, April 27, 10am–12pm / BFNR
Saturday, April 27, 2–4pm / BCNP
Sunday, April 28, 10am–12pm / SNP

Geocaching is an outdoor treasure hunt using your phone with real "treasure" to be found! In this program, you'll learn to use the GPS on your phone to discover hidden containers called geocaches—which contain prizes placed by other geocaching enthusiasts. There are coordinates all over the world to discover, including hundreds of local caches. \$6 per member; \$10 per nonmember.

It's Moth Week! Moth Nights with Audubon

Tuesday, July 23, 9–10:30pm / BCNP
Thursday, July 25, 9–10:30pm / SNP
Friday, July 26, 9–10:30pm / BFNR

Let's go mothing! Join Audubon during the 13th annual National Moth Week (July 20–28) for a night of black lighting. Pennsylvania is home to over 600 species of moths ranging from inconspicuous micro-moths to large silk moths. Begin with a short presentation then go outside to test various lighting techniques to attract moths. This event is intended for adults and children 10 or older, who must be accompanied by a responsible adult. Registration required. Free.

Make and Take: Create a Walking Stick and Hike

Saturday, August 17, 10am–12pm / BFNR
Saturday, August 24, 10am–12pm / SNP
Saturday, August 24, 2–4pm / BCNP

A walking stick is a great tool to have on the trail. Using tough and sustainable hardwood, you'll create a custom walking stick with an inlaid compass, leather lanyard, and measurement notches. Then take it out for a hike, measuring the height of trees and navigating. All materials are provided. One walking stick per registration. \$25 per member; \$35 per nonmember.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Beechwood Conservation Corps

Saturday, April 6, 10am–12pm / BFNR

Do you enjoy working outdoors? Want to help the environment on your own schedule? The Beechwood Conservation Corps (BCC) is a dedicated group of volunteers that helps to steward priority conservation areas at Beechwood Farms Nature Reserve (BFNR). BCC volunteers adopt an area and work independently with support from Audubon staff. This program will highlight major conservation efforts happening at BFNR, provide an overview of the BCC, and explore priority management zones that would benefit from additional volunteer support.

Native Plant Nursery Work Sessions

Every Tuesday from April–August, 10am–1pm or 2–5 pm / BFNR

Choose a session each Tuesday and get your hands dirty while learning new skills and making a difference for local habitat! Volunteers are needed to help with native plant nursery tasks such as transplanting seedlings, watering, and sowing seed. Space is limited; registration is required so that we can plan accordingly.

Dig in the Dirt! Garden and Landscaping Support

Every Thursday from April–August, 11am–2pm / BFNR

Volunteers are needed to help ASWP maintain demonstration gardens and other landscaped areas around Beechwood Farms Nature Reserve. Materials and training will be provided. Registration is requested.

Spring Invasive ID and Removal

Saturday, April 20, 12–2pm / BFNR

Help us remove some of the invasive plants at Beechwood. During this workday, we will discuss how to identify spring invasive species, and what physical methods can be used to remove these troublesome plants. Gloves and tools will be provided.

Litter Pick-Up

Monday, April 22, 10am–12pm / BCNP

Celebrate Earth Day with a litter pick-up that makes an immediate positive impact on local habitats and waterways. All materials will be provided including gloves, trash bags, and safety vests. Please wear long pants, sturdy shoes, and dress for the weather. Registration requested so we can best plan for the day. We will meet at the Todd Nature Reserve parking lot and disperse from there. Children must be accompanied by an adult. Free.

Cavity Nest Box Monitor Training

Saturday, April 27, 10–11:30am / BCNP

Saturday, April 27, 1–2:30pm / SNP

Learn what it takes to serve as a nest box monitor—then let us know if you're ready to volunteer to help! In this overview, you'll learn to record nest box observations in NestWatch, a nationwide nest monitoring program. Discover more about the birds that use our nest boxes and get the whole family involved in this great volunteer project! Free.

Spring Clean-up at Succop Nature Park

Saturday, May 18, 10am–12pm / SNP

Spring is here and we have a variety of outdoor tasks to accomplish to spruce-up Succop Nature Park! To reduce the possibility of tick exposure, wear light-colored long pants and a long-sleeved shirt, light-colored socks, sneakers or work boots; and spray with insect repellent. Bring a hat, refillable water bottle, and work gloves if you have them. We welcome all participants, including children. Meet us at the barn and we will divide up the projects. Free.

Beautify Buffalo Creek Nature Park

Wednesday, May 22, 10am–12pm / BCNP

Spring is here and we have a variety of outdoor tasks to get done to beautify Buffalo Creek Nature Park! To reduce the possibility of tick exposure, wear light-colored long pants and a long-sleeved shirt, light-colored socks, sneakers or work boots; and spray with insect repellent. Bring a hat, refillable water bottle, and work gloves if you have them. We welcome all participants, including children. Meet us at the pavilion and we will divide up the projects. Free.

Habitat Enhancement

Saturdays, June 1 and August 3, 9am–12pm / BFNR

Volunteers are needed to help make Beechwood even more bird- and pollinator-friendly. Activities will include removing invasive species and replacing them with high wildlife-value native species. Free.

BUFFALO CREEK REGIONAL PROGRAMS

🌐 Buffalo Creek Coalition Meeting*

Thursday, April 18, 3:30–5pm / Hybrid – BCNP or Online

Do you live, work, or play in the Buffalo Creek Watershed? Join Audubon and the Buffalo Creek Coalition to learn more about the state of the watershed, habitat restoration and enhancement efforts, monitoring programs, and opportunities to get involved while also sharing your priorities, perspectives, and concerns within the region to help guide our work. Light refreshments will be served. Can't make it but want to learn more or share your thoughts? Email Nelson Milano, Watershed Coordinator, at nmilano@aswp.org.

Buffalo Creek Coalition Open House*

Thursday, July 18, 6–8pm / BCNP

Audubon and the Buffalo Creek Coalition invite you to connect with experts and learn about the research and work being conducted in the Buffalo Creek Watershed. Audubon, Duquesne University and Butler and Armstrong Conservation Districts among others will be on site to provide technical assistance and showcase work dedicated to improving water quality and forest health. Refreshments will be served.

**Offered free of cost by ASWP and the Buffalo Creek Coalition with support from the Pennsylvania Department of Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Environmental Stewardship Fund.*

***These programs are offered free of cost with support from Richard King Mellon Foundation and under an assistance agreement from the Environmental Protection Agency's Region III Environmental Education Fund.*

**** These programs are offered free of cost thanks to generous support from the Fox Chapel Garden Club.*

**HELP SUPPORT
BENEFICIAL INSECTS
WITH INSECT HOUSES**
NOW AVAILABLE AT AUDUBON
NATURE STORES!



ASK THE NATURALIST

CERTIFIED BACKYARD HABITATS

In this edition of Ask the Naturalist, it's the naturalist who will be asking the questions! We're spotlighting the successful Certified Backyard Habitat of Minette Vaccariello, who transformed her small city yard into a beautiful habitat that supports birds, butterflies, and beneficial insects.

WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO JOIN THE CBH PROGRAM?

I've always been a vegetable and flower gardener but in 2016 discovered a native plant nursery that also had a demonstration flower garden. The native flowers were beautiful and thriving, even though it was a very hot July. That was when I first learned about the resilience of native plants and how well they do even through our hottest months. After growing some native perennials that summer, the following year my daughter (then four years old) started to notice all the different butterflies and fireflies visiting our urban backyard that summer. That inspired me to learn more about the wildlife that native plants can support. For me, living in the city, it became a fun challenge to see how many different kinds of butterflies, bugs, and birds I could attract to my backyard. When I heard about the Certified Backyard Habitat (CBH) program, I was excited to learn more from the experts to see how I could change my tiny urban space to support and attract an ecosystem of wildlife.

REGISTRATION IS OPEN FOR THE 2024 CERTIFIED BACKYARD HABITAT PROGRAM!

Visit aswp.org to get started! Space is limited, so register ASAP!



WHAT HAS BEEN THE MOST REWARDING PART OF YOUR CBH EXPERIENCE?

I have transformed my tiny city backyard to a naturalistic urban garden. Spring through fall, it is bursting with over 60 types of native flowers. The most rewarding part is the wildlife I've been able to attract—a variety of bees and birds, fireflies, and over 20 different types of butterflies.

DO YOU HAVE A FAVORITE BIRD OR POLLINATOR THAT VISITS YOUR BACKYARD?

My favorite pollinator that visits is the Monarch Butterfly. I have since taken several classes from Monarch Joint Venture and ASWP to learn about how to support the Monarchs and their habitat. The past two years, I have been tagging monarchs in the fall through the Monarch Watch Tagging program (a citizen science project) to help scientists better understand the Monarchs' incredible fall migration.

WOULD YOU RECOMMEND THIS PROGRAM TO NEIGHBORS?

Absolutely! Living in the city, I believe that many of my neighbors think they can't have a beautiful naturalistic native garden because they don't have big backyards. However, just a few flowers, trees, or shrubs whether in the ground or in pots make such a difference and with time will attract amazing wildlife.

ATTRACT ORIOLES TO YOUR BACKYARD!

We have feeders designed specifically for these beautiful birds! Pick up feeders and food at Audubon Nature Stores!



ASWP NEWS

EGG BREAKS IN HAYS BALD EAGLES' NEST

On March 19, the single egg in the Hays Bald Eagles' nest broke. The first sight of the crushed egg occurred just after sunrise, when the adult eagle rose up from incubating. The adult quickly realized that the egg was no longer intact and flew off of the nest. Because it's getting later into the year, it is unlikely that the pair will attempt a new clutch in 2024. This is the first year of these birds' pairing. The original male in the Hays pair disappeared in September 2023 and the new male replaced him soon thereafter.

The previous male had been paired with the female since at least 2013. Bald Eagles live about 20 years in the wild, so it's not surprising to lose one of the original breeding pair—Bald Eagles don't become sexually mature until the age of five and they'd been together for at least 10 years.

Audubon installed a new web camera on the nest this year, with the help of an arborist from Davey Tree. The cam features increased resolution that allows for crisper images of the Bald Eagles. Additionally, Audubon continues to provide the cellular service that brings the images of the eagles into homes here and across the world. Power was also run to the camera, replacing solar panels which, due to Pittsburgh cloud cover, didn't always provide the electricity needed to fully operate the camera 24/7. This project was sponsored by Duquesne Light Company and US Steel and coordinated by PixCams.

While there may not be an eaglet in 2024, it's likely that the Hays pair will stay close to the nest thanks to the abundant food and resources in the area. We're looking forward to what 2025 brings for these majestic birds.

PRE-ORDER NATIVE PLANT SALE FOR SUCCOP NATURE PARK AND BUFFALO CREEK NATURE PARK

Can't make it to our native plant nursery at Beechwood Farms Nature Reserve but want to add the beauty and habitat value in your yard? We're excited to add a pre-order native plant option for our other nature sites for the Spring 2024 planting season. Ordering will be open from May 18–28 for plant pick up on June 1 and June 2. ASWP members will receive a 10% discount. Order online at aswp.org.



Blackburnian Warbler

BIRDING 101: ASWP'S COLLEGE BIRDING PROGRAM

Thanks to support received last year from the Richard King Mellon Foundation, Audubon is expanding the number of local birders through our College Birding Program—connecting college students to birdwatching through a welcoming series of activities and outings. Our staff has been actively engaged this spring in leading regional hikes and birding programs for college students across western Pennsylvania. The initiative also provides students with birdwatching equipment that they get to keep after completing the program.

We're also planning the first local College Birding Symposium. At this autumn event, students across all participating campuses will gather to celebrate the diversity of birds during migration. A featured speaker, a mini-birding competition, and themed activities complete the event.

HUMMINGBIRDS LOVE FRESH NECTAR!

Audubon Nature Stores have hummingbird feeders and nectar to support these beautiful birds.



PS—KEEP YOUR FEEDERS CLEAN!



MEMORIALS + HONORS

MEMORIALS

John Artz

Susan + William Follansbee
Dorothy + William Hill
Alex Howson
Thomas Ingram
Mary Lou Kirkpatrick
Carolyn Luck
Patricia Malinowski
Susan Okun
Cynthia Schaff
Ann + David Wilkins

Stephen J. Botos

Lisa + Steve Botos

Helen C. Brooks

Joellen Popma + Julie Brooks

William Doyak

Fred Coder
Lorraine Noel
April Schoeneman
Cathy Tressler
David Zuk

Anne Drennen

Barbara Drennen

William F Hill

Betsy Owens

Lewis + Sally Johnson

Dana Martin

Donna Keefer

Sally + Robert Tarhi

Pauline B. Kovalchik

Jodi Cain
Kenneth Hale
Susan + Scott Heimbuch
Lauren Overzet
Mary Ann Uzelac
Michele Wetzell
Theodore Zajdel

Louis C. Meyer

Carol + Thomas Hoburg

Quinn Peyton

Amy + Rudolph Maceyko

Poe

DaniRae Block

Carol E. Prenn

Wendy + Wayne Reuter

Ruth Ralston

Amy + Rudolph Maceyko

Susan Sphar

Holly Sphar

Elaine Stovcsik

Russell Gray

Darlene Ward

Kara White

HONORS

Nancy Artz

Susan Okun

Corinne Babson

The Herb Club of America - Western PA Unit

Tingle Barnes

John Culbertson

Tim Byan

Karen + Michael Yukevich

Tom + Linda Evans

Karen Evans

Dennis + Bernie Evans

Karen Evans

Gene + Janet Filipek

Jaime Filipek

Lamar + Kiahana Horne

Kathleen Barge

Betsy Owens

Arlene + William Gordon

Paul Pilkonis

Julia Bear

Gwil Price

Ruth Ann Pastorius

Kate Richmond

Lindsay Scott

Robert Scott

Lindsay Scott

Gregg Scott

Lindsay Scott

Alex Scott

Lindsay Scott

Dave Scott

Lindsay Scott

Stella Sepulveda

Shari Murphy
Beth Worek

Alexis Sharrer

Lindsay Scott

Tom + Jo Ann Succop

Rebecca + James Mauch
Beth Succop

Ruth Weir

George Weir

Received as of March 1, 2024

Spring
ECO-MARKET

**FEATURING NATURE-INSPIRED
ARTWORK AND EARTH-CONSCIOUS
GOODS**

Join us for a one-day event featuring local artists and makers. See our website at aswp.org or scan the QR code for full details!

**SATURDAY
MAY 25
10AM-4PM**

**AT BEECHWOOD FARMS
NATURE RESERVE**

NATIVE PLANT NURSERY

OPENING DAY SALE

SATURDAY, MAY 11 • 9AM–5PM
AT BEECHWOOD FARMS NATURE RESERVE
614 DORSEYVILLE ROAD IN FOX CHAPEL



Get discounts on native plants that attract birds, butterflies, and beneficial insects to your backyard!

ASWP members receive 20% off and non-members 10% off. Choose from over 100 species of true western Pennsylvania perennials, trees, and shrubs.

www.aswp.org

Photo credit: Dan Mendenhall



**PLANNING
AN EVENT?**

Our reserves are a beautiful backdrop to your graduation party, birthday party, family gathering or wedding. Call (412) 963-6100 or visit aswp.org to learn more about the spaces we have available.



614 Dorseyville Road
Pittsburgh, PA 15238-1618

SHOP AUDUBON NATURE STORES

FOR EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO
ENJOY THE BIRDS THIS SPRING
AND SUMMER!

Beechwood Farms Nature Reserve

614 Dorseyville Road in Fox Chapel / 412-963-6100
Tuesday-Sunday from 9am-5pm

Buffalo Creek Nature Park

154 Monroe Road in Sarver / 724-295-3589
Tuesday-Sunday from 9am-5pm

Succop Nature Park

185 W. Airport Road in Butler / 724-586-2591
Tuesday-Sunday from 9am-5pm



*Magnolia
Warbler*

JOIN US FOR THE NATIVE PLANT NURSERY OPENING DAY SALE!

*Saturday, May 11, 9am-5pm at
Beechwood Farms Nature Reserve*

We'll have a wide selection of true western Pennsylvania native perennials, shrubs, and trees available—and our staff will be on hand to help you choose the right native plants for your yard.

An extra 10% discount will be offered—that's 20% off for ASWP members and 10% off for non-members.

Can't make it on the sale date? Native plants will be available for sale at the Beechwood Nature Store through October.