Final Report on the All Trails Challenge! p. 6
A Big Night for FOW Volunteers! p. 8
Tips on Helping Children Connect with Nature p. 10

Preserving the natural beauty and wildness of the Wissahickon Valley for 92 years

Photo by Kevin Bennett
A MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

As a parent with two daughters, I see first-hand the benefits my children receive from exploring the Wissahickon. Their enjoyment of the park is very hands-on. They lift up rocks to discover what lives underneath, create designs with fallen leaves, and build small “houses” for critters.

Our feature in this issue focuses on the importance of children spending unstructured time in nature (see p. 10). It contributes to healthy child development, fosters empathy, stimulates imagination and creativity, and helps children develop gross-motor skills and risk assessment capacities. You will find in our feature a list of nature books you can share with your children and some tips on exploring the natural world when you are with them in the park. I find my experience of the Wissahickon is enhanced when I share it with my daughters. Seeing them discover things in the park allows me to rediscover it all with the same sense of joy.

Many families took advantage of FOW’s first All Trails Challenge and raised over $25,000 for the preservation of the park. Those who came on hikes with me got to explore little-used parts of the Wissahickon. You will find in our feature a list of nature books you can share with your children and some tips on exploring the natural world when you are with them in the park. I find my experience of the Wissahickon is enhanced when I share it with my daughters. Seeing them discover things in the park allows me to rediscover it all with the same sense of joy.

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On page 13, John Wenderoth of The American Chestnut Foundation reports on the efforts to restore the American chestnut tree. If you missed his Valley Talk in November, this is your chance to catch up. FOW hopes to take part in one of these pilot programs in the future and rediscover the place of the American chestnut in the Wissahickon Valley.

You may notice some staff changes in this issue. FOW welcomes two new staff members: Peg Shaw, Project Manager, and Christina Anthony, Volunteer Coordinator. John Holback, former Volunteer Coordinator, has taken on the new position of Field Coordinator. These three staff members work extensively with FOW volunteers, who rely on to complete projects and execute programs throughout the park. We couldn’t do our work without them. Take a moment to read about all they do for the Wissahickon on page 8, and learn how you can get involved in one of our volunteer programs on p. 9.

Children exploring and enjoying the Wissahickon today are likely to grow into adults with a reverence for the natural world and an innate understanding of our place in nature. Those boys and girls running around the park today will be the future stewards of the Wissahickon. There are many reasons to preserve the park, but one of the most important is for children and future generations. Please consider donating to our annual appeal before the end of this year or become an FOW member. Our new children’s book, Good Night Wissahickon Valley Park is free with a new family membership and a great way to begin exploring the park with your young children. Then head down to the Wissahickon and have an adventure!

Maura McCarthy, Executive Director
Photo by Laurie Beck Peterson

Friends of the Wissahickon

The mission of Friends of the Wissahickon is to preserve the natural beauty and wildness of the Wissahickon Valley and stimulate public interest therein.

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Sarah West, Listings Editor
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UNITED WAY DONATIONS
Friends of the Wissahickon can receive membership/donations through the United Way. Our United Way number is 9882. If this is the most convenient way for you to give, please do so. Visit our website (fow.org) to learn about the benefits of membership in Friends of the Wissahickon.
PUBLIC MEETING
JANUARY 25
Friends of the Wissahickon will host a Public Meeting on January 25, 2017, at the Chestnut Hill Friends Meeting house to discuss progress on its Sustainable Trails Initiative and other projects this past year. During the meeting FOW will also discuss upcoming projects for 2017. Visit fow.org/events for more details.

DON’T EAT THIS COOKIE!
The porch on the Wissahickon Environmental Center was completed in 2015, but it’s been missing an important element that was recently added this fall: a tree cookie. The WEC is known as the Tree House because of a tree that once grew through the porch roof. While the tree cannot be replaced, FOW is doing its best to pay homage to it through the installation of a “tree cookie” in the porch floor directly beneath a skylight where the tree used to grow. Next time you visit the Tree House, step up onto the porch and look down—then up!

FAIRMOUNT PARK ONE OF 15 GREAT PLACES IN AMERICA
Fairmount Park has been recognized by the American Planning Association (APA) as one of 15 Great Places in America. This award annually honors neighborhoods, streets, and public spaces for their character, cultural identity, and use of sustainable practices. “Fairmount Park was honored for its innovative watershed techniques,” says Executive Director Maura McCarthy. “What has grown out of that initiative is some of Philadelphia’s remarkable parks, especially Wissahickon Valley Park.”

ONLINE CHATTER
Over 330 people responded to our call on Facebook for letters of support for FOW’s nomination of Forbidden Drive as Trail of the Year 2017. We are touched by your support and so happy that you love the Wissahickon and Forbidden Drive as much as we do! We should know the decision of the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources early next year. We’ll keep you posted. Like FOW’s Facebook page to get the news first!

See a tree down across the trail? A damaged sign? Report a non-emergency problem in the park, donate to FOW, or subscribe to text updates by texting WISS to (267) 966-2207.

FALL FEATHERED FRIENDS
Brilliant foliage is not the only reason visitors flock to the Wissahickon in the fall. Many species of birds reside, nest, or migrate through the park during autumn. In September, bird enthusiasts enjoyed a slide presentation by Ruth Pfeffer at a Valley Talk, sponsored by Valley Green Bank, followed by a bird hike later in the week. Pfeffer, owner of Birding with Ruth, is credited with creating the birding program at the Morris Arboretum where she is an instructor. She has led birding expeditions throughout the Mid-Atlantic region and abroad since the 1990s. Read an exclusive interview with her at fow.org/chatting-bird-expert.
WHAT’S GOING ON IN THE WISSAHICKON?

Andorra Natural Area Stormwater Management and Sediment Reduction

Those who visit the Wissahickon Environmental Center (the Tree House) in the Andorra Natural Area are probably familiar with the soggy ground conditions following even the slightest rainfall. To address these chronic conditions and improve the functionality of the grounds and environmental health of the site, FOW has conceptualized and secured funds from the PA Department of Environmental Protection for a first-of-its-kind-in-the-Wissahickon-Valley micro watershed restoration project.

This is nothing less than a comprehensive approach to landscape restoration at the watershed scale. This means that solutions to the soggy landscape at the Tree House involve interventions not only at the site, but far upslope and downslope from the site. After posting a Request for Proposals and reviewing six submittals, FOW awarded the project to a team led by A.D. Marble. The preliminary data collection and survey phase is set to begin before the end of the year, starting with a meeting led by the A.D. Marble team with Philadelphia Parks & Recreation and the staffs from the Tree House and FOW. They will discuss the vision and programmatic details for the area surrounding the Wissahickon Environmental Center.

Three Problematic Conditions

1. If the forest floor was healthy with a thick organic mat to capture and hold 80-90% of precipitation, the Tree House site would not be suffering so much from soggy site conditions. However, thanks to the abundance of invasive earthworm species devouring the organic material on the forest floor, precipitation that reaches the ground surface is not captured. Instead, it collects and flows downhill, creating a myriad of mini-rivulets, picking up speed and converging at the Tree House before continuing its path to the Wissahickon Creek. There is much more to discuss regarding the negative impacts of earthworms in the forest, but suffice it to say that earthworms create a series of stressors in the forest and significantly undermine its health and stability.

2. The built environment at the top of the watershed was not designed to capture and infiltrate precipitation that falls there. Instead, like nearly all of the built environment, it was designed to convey water off site as quickly as possible into stormwater sewers. The underground circuit of stormwater sewers not only captures and carries precipitation, but buries and captures historic surface water streams and tributaries. Where does all this piped water drain to? In the Wissahickon Valley, it drains to surface outfalls throughout the park. This creates a couple of troubling conditions. First, it robs the landscape uphill of the Tree House of vital water infiltration and ground water recharging, creating artificially dry conditions for the forest and presenting tremendous stress levels to canopy trees and other vegetation.

Second, when these storm flows (fast moving, high volume, water flows of short duration) reach the end of the pipe at the outfall, deep cuts into the landscape are created, either destroying preexisting surface flow channels or creating new ones. These conditions prevent precipitation from being infiltrated into the ground on lower slopes. As surface channels deepen, the groundwater level drops, further drying out the forest. Storm flows erode soil which eventually gets carried to the Wissahickon Creek, negatively impacting water quality and habitat there.

Third, throughout the forest, habitat is damaged or destroyed due to a lack of natural water flows.

The complexity and degree of cascading negative impacts on the landscape can seem overwhelming. However, with the increasing rise in watershed-scale analysis and understanding, and problem-solving solutions among governmental, environmental, and land-use professionals, comprehensive approaches can lead to significant improvements in ecological function and human enjoyment.

Proposed solutions for the Andorra Natural Area watershed involve a range of interventions both major and subtle. Project funding will support the major earth-moving components of Phase I of the plan, while FOW staff and volunteers will accomplish the more subtle efforts throughout the watershed.

3. Trails and access roads have not been properly maintained due to a lack of resources. In some cases these pathways were not initially designed to carry stormwater flows gently onto the forest floor. Therefore they have become storm flow channels resulting in trail and roadway surface deterioration, erosion, and gullying.

A Path Forward

What a headache! The complexity and degree of cascading negative impacts on the landscape can seem overwhelming. However, with the increasing rise in watershed-scale analysis and understanding, and problem-solving solutions among governmental, environmental, and land-use professionals, comprehensive approaches can lead to significant improvements in ecological function and human enjoyment.

Proposed solutions for the Andorra Natural Area watershed involve a range of interventions both major and subtle. Project funding will support the major earth-moving components of Phase I of the plan, while FOW staff and volunteers will accomplish the more subtle efforts throughout the watershed.

TELL ME MORE

A watershed is defined as the area in which water flows through the landscape: groundwater, surface water, and stormwater. Thanks to gravity, water always moves to the lowest possible elevation, following the path of least resistance. FOW identified approximately 30 acres of terrain within the watershed drainage basin where the Tree House is located, and the majority of that acreage is upslope from the Tree House, with water flowing down toward it.
MEET FOW’S NEW PROJECT MANAGER!

Peg Shaw joined the FOW staff in mid-August as Project Manager. She comes to FOW after consulting with the New York City Parks Department on a variety of forest restoration projects and working with the NYC Department of Environmental Protection on green infrastructure projects.

Peg discovered the joys of Wissahickon Valley Park in 1996 after moving to Philadelphia from Boston and becoming an FOW Trail Ambassadors in 2009. Her experiences in the Wissahickon led to a mid-life career change in 2010 when she sold her small business and earned a master’s degree in landscape architecture with a concentration in ecological restoration from Temple University. She has since earned certification from the International Society of Arboriculture as an Arborist and Qualified Tree Risk Assessor.

In addition to helping shepherd FOW infrastructure projects to fruition, Peg is very much looking forward to expanding FOW’s habitat restoration efforts, deepening the knowledge and skill base of our volunteers, conducting field research through partnerships with local universities and public high schools, and working with a variety of park-user groups to understand, protect, and enhance the unique attributes that contribute to the enjoyment and appreciation of this amazing regional treasure.

She looks forward to seeing you out on the trails!

Some of the highlights for major components of the plan include increasing the capture and detention of stormwater from Northwestern Avenue above the parking lot. Most notably, the existing basin will be enlarged and regraded and a forebay (water catchment area that intercepts stormwater flows and allows sediments and debris to drop out before entering the infiltration basin) will be added to filter water flows prior to entering the basin. Downstream from the parking lot, a series of regenerative hillside step pools will be installed, and trails and access roads will be regraded and designed with vegetated swales.

At the grounds of the Environmental Center, stormwater will be conveyed to and filtered by a beautiful and educational infiltration garden while the picnic area will be protected from wet soils and the lawn will be reinvigorated. Overabundant water in the infiltration garden will follow a meandering surface path to a restored wetland at the current site of the collapsed dam wall.

Below this point, following the access road down to Forbidden Drive, current project funding allows for permits and designs only. FOW hopes to secure further funding for this Phase II of the project using the designs developed in Phase I.

How will FOW staff and volunteers be involved? We will bolster the project goals after construction with invasive plant removal, native plant installation, micro-topographic enhancements to encourage infiltration, habitat creation, and much more.

Andorra Natural Area
Stormwater Management & Sediment Reduction Project

Date: 4/25/2016
Prepared by: Henry Stroud

Secondary Gravel Road
WEC
Primary Gravel Road
Parking Area 1

Work Zone

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>Existing Streets</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Existing Trail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Work Zone 1 can extend as far upslope as necessary

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Friends of the Wissahickon • Winter 2016
FOW MEETS THE ALL TRAILS CHALLENGE!

ALL TRAILS CHALLENGE 2016

Friends of the Wissahickon

FOW raised over $25,000 with the All Trails Challenge this fall, and we couldn’t have done it without the 300 participants who gave of their time and resources. They hiked, they biked, they ran . . . and then they shared it with us all on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram!

The All Trails Challenge was an exciting four-month long event that invited park users to explore Wissahickon Valley Park by hiking, walking, running, horseback riding, or biking all 50 miles of its scenic trails. Participants raised money for the continued preservation of the park by inviting their friends, family, and coworkers to sponsor them. The Challenge ran from August 20 to November 29, and included a fun kick-off party, mileage and fundraising incentives, lots of give-aways, and scheduled hikes and walks with great prizes, including hotel stays, a Fitbit, a Wissahickon Brewery tour, many gift certificates, and lots of FOW swag.

“The first year of the All Trails Challenge was a big success,” says Executive Director Maura McCarthy, who led several hikes during the Challenge to help people reach their 50 mile goal. (Twenty-nine challengers completed 50 or more miles.) “My hope was that the Challenge would give people a way to discover new places in the Wissahickon—places they have never visited. Those who took hikes with me got to see parts of the park we had not seen before, and I enjoyed hearing their perspectives on the Wissahickon.”

All funds raised by the All Trails Challenge will support the preservation of Wissahickon Valley Park by FOW as we restore historical park structures, eliminate invasive plant species, monitor watershed management issues, and restore trails. Thanks to our sponsors and everyone who participated, including FOW Trail Ambassadors who led ATC hikes and volunteers who helped at Challenge events. We are already looking forward to the All Trails Challenge 2017!

ATC CHAMPIONS

TOP MILEAGE CHALLENGER >>> MARK LASHLEY 500+ MILES
YOUNGEST CHALLENGER >>> JOSH LAFFERTY
TOP FUNDRAISER >>> ANNA CLAIRE $2,320
TOP FUNDRAISING TEAM >>> IRUNTHEHILL $875

How have you explored the trails?

I’ve been running the trails almost exclusively. I would say I’ve done about 6-7 miles just doing leisurely hikes or walking my dog, but the bulk of my distance has been from running. I even bought my first pair of trail shoes just to do the Challenge!

What made you want to take the All Trails Challenge?

I’ve loved the Wissahickon and have spent a lot of time on Forbidden Drive, but the Challenge gave me an excuse to check out more of the park. I’d seen the signs for it, and had a friend sign up, so I said, “Me too,” and we started a team.

What have you learned about the park?

I’ve been amazed at how many different types of terrain and scenery there are in the park. Each trail has its own unique characteristics, and it’s fun to design routes that give you a variety of things to experience. I remember discovering the Houston Meadow for the first time and being amazed by the scenery and how the rest of the park looks from up there.
NATIONAL PUBLIC LANDS DAY

To celebrate National Public Lands Day we decided to try something new. This year we hosted a volunteer workday/workshop focusing on basic trail maintenance. Starting at Blue Stone Bridge, we worked our way past Lover’s Leap, onto the Yellow Trail, and back down to the bridge. Volunteers learned about and practiced clearing drains, fixing rolling grade dips, and removing outslope berms. Crew Leaders John Cassidy, David Dannenberg, Emily Southerton, and Brad Maule helped instruct the nearly two dozen volunteers.

LOVER’S LEAP CLEANUP

On October 29 FOW Crew Leader Brad Maule hosted a cleanup around Lover’s Leap and the Henry Avenue Bridge. With assistance from David Bower and a hardworking volunteer crew, Brad and company were able to remove about a dozen bags each of recycling and garbage.

SUMAC STREET

This fall we hosted a series of workdays at the Sumac Street trailhead in the Wissahickon neighborhood. The trailhead is located at the intersection of Sumac Street and Vicaris Street and is just up the trail from the 100 Steps. Dozens of individual volunteers, as well as groups from Outward Bound and the Wissahickon Interested Citizens Association (WICA), worked with FOW and the Philadelphia Water Department to remove approximately 12,000 pounds of debris and chips, and 4,000 pounds of accumulated yard waste and invasive plant species from the hillside and trailhead. Volunteers also helped rebuild the trailhead itself by installing six terraces to replace the treacherously eroded drop-off from the street. Then they installed about 100 feet of split rail fence to discourage future dumping and protect the native shrubs that were planted on December 3.

Photo by Charles Uniatowski

SAVE THE DATE!
JANUARY 16
MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY OF SERVICE

LOVE YOUR PARK DAY

This year FOW spent Love Your Park Day (LYPD) planting native trees and shrubs at the trail intersection behind Monastery Stables. A total of 56 volunteers attended LYPD this fall and planted 381 trees and shrubs, an impressive feat. All the plants were watered (using almost 200 gallons of water) and mulched. In addition to the work done on LYPD, many volunteers helped prep the site by removing invasive plant species, spreading 20 yards of mulch, and erecting close to 300 feet of split rail fence to protect the planting area.

STRUCTURES CREW

FOW’s Structures Crew has spent considerable time restoring the fence along the entire length of Forbidden Drive (about 5.3 miles). On paper this sounds like an easy task, but in reality it’s a different story. Each concrete fence post weighs about 200 pounds and is about six feet long. Broken posts need to be pulled out of their holes and new ones inserted and packed into place. Many posts have tipped over or have sunk into the ground and need to be straightened or raised up, which is also a difficult task, especially by hand. Throughout the job, which is on-going, the Structures Crew has fun and is constantly coming up with ways to make the job easier, better, and faster. In addition, they installed a safety cable on the Kitchen’s Land Bridge, repaired a fence at the Livezey Dam, and began work on the new pole barn being built at PPR’s District 4 lot.
FOW’s board and staff celebrated the contributions and hard work of FOW volunteers on November 17. Jack Ott and the staff of Valley Green Inn generously contributed to a lovely dinner that everyone enjoyed. Afterward, Outreach Manager Sarah Marley and Field Coordinator John Holback spoke on the accomplishments of the Structures Crew, Crew Leaders, Trail Ambassadors, and other volunteers throughout the year. Below are highlights from their presentations.

**Crew Leaders**
FOW’s 27 volunteer Crew Leaders help plan and lead volunteer workdays, and they are valued for their input, guidance, and encouragement. This year FOW welcomed four new Crew Leaders to the program: Brad Maule, Joe Mikuliak, Dean Rosenbranz, and Emily Southerton.

**Trail Ambassadors**
Trail Ambassadors (TAs) assist and educate people in the park about everything from directions to safety needs to park history, flora, and fauna. FOW has over 100 TAs, with 21 new recruits in 2016. A special thanks to Debbie Carr and Jeff Clark for sharing their time and expertise in training our new TAs. Bruce Wagner topped the individual TA contribution again this year with over 300 patrol hours logged, not including time he spent blazing trails with TAs Erica Lynes and Gerry Schweiger.

**PA Master Naturalists**
As coordinating partner for Philadelphia County PA Master Naturalist (PMN) training, FOW connects with highly skilled volunteers and educators from partner organizations throughout the region. Many PMN trainees have also become Trail Ambassadors or perform service projects with FOW. This year, 15 PMN volunteers participated in over 50 hours of environmental education.

**Structures Crew**
A special thank you to FOW’s Structures Crew, who spent 897 hours tackling a variety of jobs at Courtesy Stables, including the restoration of the historic springhouse next to the barn. They also replaced 135 rails and 36 concrete posts for the fence along Forbidden Drive, repaired park benches, and built dozens of animal boxes. Special thanks to Steve O’Kula, groundskeeper at the Wissahickon Environmental Center, for the use of his tools and wood shop.

**Conservation Volunteers**

**Trail Work:** Volunteers built 3,000 feet of trail near Mt. Airy Avenue this year, in addition to completing regular maintenance throughout the park. Special thanks to students from the Crefeld School and Episcopal Academy, and Crew Leaders John Cassidy, John Jensen, Dan Mercer, Joe Mikuliak, Dean Rosencranz, and Kara Schoch.

**Trash Removal:** Over 500 bags of trash were collected by volunteers and FOW’s seasonal field crew. FOW focused on major sites such as the Wissahickon Bus Transfer Station, the Walnut Lane and Henry Avenue Bridges, and Devil’s Pool.

**Planting:** FOW volunteers planted native trees and shrubs at the Roxborough Avenue Trail and behind Monastery Stables. Special thanks to the 50 volunteers who planted 380 trees and shrubs for Love Your Park Day.

**Chain Sawing:** Volunteers cleared 40 fallen trees from park trails this year. Special thanks to David Dannenberg, Chuck Uniatsowski, Kenn Rymdeko, and Steve O’Kula.

**Field Coordinator John Holback presents the volunteer highlights of 2016.**

**Special Thanks to**
T&F Farmer’s Pride
High Point Café
for donating food and coffee for our volunteers!

**Photos by Charles Uniatsowski**

**VOLUNTEER HOURS—AND COUNTING!**

**PA MASTER NATURALISTS >> 712**
**CREW LEADERS >> 559**
**STRUCTURES CREW >> 897**
**FIELDWORK**

**Trail Ambassadors >> 3,181**
**TRAIL AMBASSADORS >> 3,973**

*Figures reflect totals as of November 30, 2016.
**Includes all other volunteer work.

**Volunteer of the Year: Merritt Rhoad**
Merritt Rhoad has been an FOW volunteer since 2002 and his contributions are numerous. He is a long-standing member of and now leads the Structures Crew as they repair bridges, sheds, fences, gates, roofs, benches, and signs. He is also a graduate of the first Trail Ambassador class and has accumulated many hours conducting patrols and leading hikes. Merritt is a volunteer who is talented at both fieldwork and outreach activities. He has also been contributing to FOW since 2007 in a unique way. He recommends FOW for an annual grant from IBM, his prior employer, based on his volunteer hours. To date, he has leveraged $10,000 for FOW through this program.

**Special Thanks to**
T&F Farmer’s Pride
High Point Café
for donating food and coffee for our volunteers!

**Volunteer Hours—**

**28 OUTREACH TABLES**

**55 GUIDED TABLES**

**300 FIELD REPORTS**

**400 PATROL SHIFTS**

**600 HIKE PARTICIPANTS**

**2,000 INTERACTIONS WITH PARK USERS**
A VALUABLE VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE FOR YOU AND THE PARK

by Sarah Marley, Outreach Manager

When you become a volunteer with Friends of the Wissahickon, you get back as much as you give to the park. Through FOW volunteer programs you will meet and work with others who care about the Wissahickon as much as you do. With them you will learn more about the park—it’s history, geology, wildlife, plants, and more—which will enhance your experience of the Wissahickon.

FOW volunteers provide critical support needed to protect, preserve, and enhance Wissahickon Valley Park. Each year, our volunteers work over 12,000 hours to help FOW perform duties and complete projects that are essential for the Wissahickon to thrive, and the skills they learn can be transferred to the work sector. In exchange for their support of our mission, FOW provides volunteers with a range of benefits and special opportunities. Their work is valuable to us, and so we try to make their volunteer experience valuable for them.

Choose the Volunteer Program That Works For You

FOW is committed to enabling our volunteers to be leaders in the community and allowing them to directly participate in the preservation of Wissahickon Valley Park in ways they choose.

FOW’s leadership volunteers complete four core classes together, during which they learn about park history, watershed health, FOW, and our current projects, and complete First Aid/CPR/AED training. Classes are usually scheduled on either weeknights or weekends.

Once these classes are completed, volunteers will have the option to pursue additional classes focused on their particular interests and expectations. Three areas of focus are currently available for volunteers—Trail Ambassadors, Outreach Corps, and Crew Leaders—and new classes and subjects are always being added.

BENEFITS FOR FOW VOLUNTEERS!

- Become a Wissahickon expert!
- Enjoy the satisfaction that comes from helping others and Wissahickon Valley Park.
- Gain valuable, transferable knowledge you can share with your friends, neighbors, and community.
- Connect with other lovers of the Wissahickon.
- Participate in ongoing education about the Wissahickon through workshops, programs, and field trips.
- Receive a uniform and gear: hat, shirt, backpack, etc.
- Become First Aid/CPR/AED certified.
- Be recognized at FOW’s Annual Volunteer Recognition Night.
- Become a community leader.
- While on duty, receive a 50% discount at Valley Green Inn snack bar and 10% discount at The Cedars House Café.

BE FOW’S EYES AND EARS AS A TRAIL AMBASSADOR

Trail Ambassadors are park docents who aid and educate park visitors about everything park related: directions, safety needs, park history, flora, fauna, geology, and more.

Required Courses

- Wildlife
- Geology
- Rules and Regulations
- Customer Service and Outreach
- Program Logistics

BE THE FACE OF FOW IN THE OUTREACH CORPS

Become a member of the Outreach Corps and you will have the opportunity to represent Friends of the Wissahickon in the park and in surrounding communities. Many visitors to Wissahickon Valley Park have never heard of FOW and are unaware that FOW membership is a great way to support the park they love. Personal contact with our Outreach Corps volunteers is often just what they need to become an FOW member.

Required Courses

- Staffing Membership Tables
- Communications & Logistics

TRAINING REQUIREMENTS FOR ALL VOLUNTEERS

- Be committed to helping preserve Wissahickon Valley Park.
- Meet with the Volunteer Coordinator to discuss training and program requirements so you can determine which volunteer leadership group is right for you.
- Pay a $100 registration fee, which includes one-year basic membership with FOW. (Volunteer leaders are expected to maintain a current FOW membership.)
- Obtain free criminal background and child abuse history background checks every two years.
- Maintain a working e-mail address. Communication and scheduling of FOW volunteers is primarily via e-mail.
- Sign the one-time volunteer release form.

CREW LEADERS LOVE TO GET THEIR HANDS DIRTY

Crew Leaders are volunteers who become skilled in leading volunteer groups in the park and sharing their knowledge and expertise with others. They work directly with our Volunteer & Field Coordinators to help plan and lead volunteer workdays throughout the park. Crew Leaders can choose to focus on trail work, habitat restoration, structures, or trash and graffiti removal. Class schedules and topics vary from year to year.

Required Courses

- Volunteer Leadership
- Tool Safety
- Sustainable Trails Initiative
- Ecological Practices

Trail Courses

- Sustainable Trail Construction
- Trails 101
- Stonework
- Rigging
- Trail Flagging
- Basic Machine Operation*
- Advanced Machine Operation*
- Chainsaw Use and Safety*

Habitat Restoration Courses

- Forestry Management
- Native Plants & Plant Communities
- Invasive Species & Their Impacts
- Invasive Plant Removal Techniques
- Reforestation Techniques
- Plant Identification in the Field*
- Plant Stewardship Index Training*
- Small Stream Restoration*

*These classes have additional requirements. Contact FOW’s Volunteer Coordinator Christina Anthony at anthony@fow.org for more information.
According to Richard Louv, advocate for connecting children and their families to nature and author of *Last Child in the Woods* (2008), “Today, average eight-year-olds are better able to identify cartoon characters than native species, such as beetles and oak trees, in their own community.” Louv has done extensive research on how children’s mental, physical, and spiritual health are directly linked to our relationship with nature (Louv, 2008).

Just as children need sufficient sleep every night, they also require significant exposure to nature. According to a study by the Landscape and Human Health Laboratory (formerly the Human-Environment Research Laboratory) at the University of Illinois, green space supports healthy child development (Taylor & Kuo, 2009). However, many children lack exposure to green space. Children between the ages of eight and eighteen spend an average of 53 hours a week plugged into electronics, according to a national survey by the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation in 2010. Consequently, many children and teens spend more time “plugged in” instead of going outside.

As a parent, you worry. Our sedentary lifestyle contributes to childhood obesity, which has doubled in the past twenty years. In addition, studies show an increase in the diagnoses of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

Yet outdoor time can counteract ADHD symptoms and, through outdoor exercise, help keep children active. According to a study in *Environment & Behavior*, “Children regularly exposed to the outdoors are thought to experience a reduction of ADHD symptoms” (Hi-Tec Sports, 2016). Even spending ten to fifteen minutes a day outside has positive mental benefits by reducing stress.

So how do we get children to go outside? Whether this is your first or fiftieth time in the woods, here are some tips to enjoy a walk with children and entice them to join you:

- **What’s under a rock or log?** Turn over a decomposing log or large rock and see what is living underneath. You may find bright and shiny beetles, burrowing pill bugs, iridescent salamander eggs, or mysterious fungi. Gently return the log or rock to its original place when you are done exploring to preserve the habitat for these fun and vulnerable creatures.

- **Walk silently for a few minutes.** Stand still and count the number of different sounds you hear. Notice what is buzzing, chirping, and flying around.

- **Bring a journal.** Write down your thoughts and observations. Sketch what you see or craft a poem. Nature creates a vast array of topics to write about.

- **Become a detective.** Look for signs of an animal or insect: a half-eaten leaf, squiggly lines from beetles on a decomposing log, or tiny evidence of animal tracks. Help children hypothesize about who was there and what might have happened. Add a dose of fantasy and frivolity by also looking for trolls, fairies, and giants.

- **Create nature art!** Gather natural materials to make something on the spot. It will challenge you and your child to think on your feet, see art come alive in three dimensions, and appreciate nature’s beauty.

- **Bring a local field guidebook.** What type of tree or bird is that? Bring a field guide and look it up. Books from the *Golden Guides Series* (St. Martin’s Press) are some of our favorites to use with children. We also recommend *Discover Nature Close to Home: Things to Know and Things to Do* by Elizabeth P. Lawlor. It is fun to discover exactly what plant or animal (or animal track) you discovered!

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stream or pond water holds many surprisingly tiny critters.

- **Carry a snack or drink.** Nothing beats a good snack during a long walk for a little tyke.

- **Stay warm and end early.** Dress in layers so you can adjust to changes in temperature. It doesn’t matter if you spend fifteen minutes or three hours outside. The important thing is to keep it fun. End early so your child will want to go again.

Playing in nature offers many benefits, including fostering empathy. The *Journal of Therapeutic Horticulture* notes that children who play in nature are more likely to develop positive feelings about others and their surroundings (White, 2004).

Playing in nature also stimulates imagination and creativity. Research shows that “the outdoor environment led to more symbolic play in both boys and girls as compared to the indoor environment” (Frost, et al. 2001). Unlike video games or apps, nature requires children to use imagination and creativity in their play. It’s easy for children to pretend to be animals while playing where animals live.

During outdoor exploration and observation, adults can foster a child’s vocabulary by asking questions: What did you discover? What sounds do you hear? What color are these rocks? Why are the leaves changing color? Where do animals go when the weather changes?

With supervision the outdoors can be a safe and fun place for children to develop gross-motor skills, as well as risk assessment capacities. Hiking on uneven terrain, climbing on trees and rocks, and balancing on fallen logs are just a few ways to exercise outside.

These types of physical activities also lead to better health. A study from the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* found children living in “green neighborhoods” (those that rely primarily on active and public transportation) had a lower Body Mass Index (BMI) on average (Bell, 2008). The researchers attributed this result to increased physical activity or time spent outdoors, and concluded that “greenness” offers an environmental approach to preventing childhood obesity.

Obesity isn’t the only health issue that nature has the potential to address. Another study from the *Journal of Epidemiology & Community Health* reports that children living in areas with more trees have lower rates of asthma (Lovasi, 2008). If your neighborhood doesn’t have a lot of trees, perhaps you can find a park nearby, like Wissahickon Valley Park.

With 1,800 acres of parkland and over 50 miles of trails, the Wissahickon offers the perfect “nature Rx.” Whether you are eight or eighty, the Wissahickon woods offers something for everyone. Enjoy!

Mary Ann Boyer is a parent and former science teacher. She now helps schools and businesses become more “green” through Boyer Sudduth Environmental Consultants. Grace Yi is a nature preschool teacher at the Schuylkill Center for Environmental Education and an intern at Boyer Sudduth Environmental Consultants (boyersudduth.com).

**CHECK OUT THESE CHILDREN’S BOOKS!**

**Backyard Books Series** by Judy Allen and Tudor Humphries
- *Frog Heaven: Ecology of a Vernal Pool* by Doug Wechsler
- *Good Night Wissahickon Valley Park* of course!
- *In a Nutshell* by Joseph Anthony
- *The Lorax* by Dr. Seuss
- *Owl Moon* by Jane Yolen
- *The Salamander Room* by Anne Mazer
- *Stellaluna* by Janell Cannon
- *Stranger in the Woods: A Photographic Fantasy* by Carl R. Sams
- *Under one Rock, Bugs, Slugs and other Ughs* by Anthony D. Frederick
- *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle

Recommended by Maura McCarthy, FOW Executive Director, and Trish Fries, WEC

**Sources**

- Lovasi, Gina Schellenbaum, James W Quinn, Kathryn M Neckerman, Matthew S Perzanowski, and Andrew Rundle. 2008. “Children living in areas with more street trees have lower asthma prevalence.” *Journal of Epidemiology & Community Health.* http://jas.bmj.com/content/62/5/379.full
The 2016 Biennial Wissahickon Photo Contest was the most successful to date with over 110 photographers submitting over 300 photographs. Presented in partnership with the Wissahickon Valley Watershed Association (WVWA) for the first time, the contest included photos taken within Wissahickon Valley Park, along the Green Ribbon trail, and on any of the WVWA managed preserves.

Thanks to everyone who submitted photos for participating and supporting the Wissahickon watershed. The winners are printed here, but you may see other submissions in future print publications as well as online. Special thanks to Jamie Stewart, who judged the contest. A former member of WVWA’s Board of Directors, many of his photos were featured in Wissahickon Worth Preserving: The Preservation of a Pennsylvania Watershed (2007).

- **Best in Show**
  - Fantasy Walkway
  - By Tom Lo

- **First Place, Junior Submission**
  - A Good Day to Hammock
  - By Joseph McDermott

- **People’s Choice**
  - Smile Break
  - By Rachael Balascak

- **First Place, Landscape**
  - Autumn Color Parade
  - By Mark Lipshutz

- **First Place, Structures**
  - Two Bridges
  - By Monika Hemmers

- **First Place, Wildlife**
  - Wildlife
  - By Doris Rafaeli

- **First Place, People**
  - Houston Meadow Riders: Josh Delp and Mike Jagiecki
  - By Josh Delp

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ONE TREE AT A TIME: RESTORING THE AMERICAN CHESTNUT

By John Wenderoth, PA-NJ Chapter of The American Chestnut Foundation

The American chestnut was not just another tree. Some called it a perfect tree and its loss the greatest ecological disaster in recent human history. Capable of growing to a diameter of five feet and reaching 100 feet in height, its reliable annual nut crops were once a major food source for wildlife and a cash crop for rural areas that sent wagon loads of chestnuts to market for the fall and winter holidays. The straight trunks produced excellent lumber that was particularly remarkable for its durability.

Just as indigenous human populations were devastated by smallpox introduced by European colonists, some native plants have also succumbed to foreign pathogens. One such disease arrived with chestnut trees from Asia.

During the first decade of the past century, a fungus found its way to America, not with colonizing armies or immigrants, but with a few Asian chestnut trees growing in a botanical garden in New York. Although the Asian trees tolerated this fungal infection, American chestnuts were devastated, and the disease—or blight—spread before scientists understood its cause and could find ways to control it.

In less than five decades, chestnut blight changed the landscape of our Appalachian region by “killing” as many as four billion trees. Ecological resilience accommodated the loss of nearly every fourth tree in many parts of the American chestnut’s native range, which ran the length of the Appalachian Mountains from New England to Georgia.

Fortunately, even though the stems of American chestnuts may quickly succumb to the blight, the roots remain viable. They continue to send out new sprouts for a number of years—often surviving long enough to flower and fruit—before the fungus kills these stems too.

Though the Chinese chestnut is often disease resistant and produces larger nuts that are easier to harvest, it lacks the stature of its American cousin and cannot compete with our tall native trees in the natural landscape. Restoring the American tree to our forests has been the dream of many since the blight began to take its toll.

During the early years after the blight was discovered, panic may have prevailed as attempts were made to restrict its spread by some, while others made efforts to find native trees with evidence of resistance. In restricting the spread of the blight by destroying native chestnuts, sources of native resistance may have been lost.

By the 1950s, research and financial support waned, and for the following decades little progress was made. Then, during the early 1980s, a plant breeder advanced a new strategy, which led to the formation of The American Chestnut Foundation. TACF organized as a confederation of state chapters that contribute local variety to the breeding program, thus including genetic variability of American chestnuts over the large geographic range of the species.

**John Wenderoth is President of the PA-NJ Chapter of the American Chestnut Foundation. He also leads volunteers in maintaining Tyler Arboretum’s American Chestnut Orchard.**
TRAIL AMBASSADOR WALKS & TALKS

WALKS
Registration is recommended for all walks (required if indicated) so that participants can be informed of weather or other emergency cancellations. Unless otherwise specified, Trail Ambassador Walks may be on rocky, rugged trails that may be wet and slippery. Wear sturdy shoes or boots with socks. Long pants are recommended for protection against occasional poison ivy and possible ticks. Bring water and a snack if desired. Unless otherwise noted, children 8+ are welcome if accompanied by a responsible adult. Walks are cancelled in heavy rain or icy conditions. For more information or to register, visit fow.org.

TALKS
Trail Ambassador Talks take place on Sundays from 2 to 3 pm. All talks are held at The Cedars House Café, Northwestern Ave. and Forbidden Drive. (GPS directions do not work for this site.) Events are cancelled in the event of bad weather. Those who register will receive an email in the event The Cedars House is closed. Visit fow.org for updated information.

Kid Friendly Hike with Marv Schwartz
Saturday, December 17 • 1 - 3 pm
Meet at Valley Green Inn.
This hike takes participants along Forbidden Drive. Visit the Livezey Dam, Gorgas Creek, and Fingerspan Bridge. We will stop to enjoy our snacks and continue on to Devil’s Pool and Pee Wee Rock on return to the Inn. Level: moderate on some rocky trails.

Winter Solstice Walk Near the Mouth of the Wissahickon with Kris Soffa
Wednesday, December 21 • 10 am - noon
Meet at front parking lot at 4900 Ridge Ave., Phila., 19127.
Welcome winter with this brisk walk with PA Master Naturalist Kris Soffa. We will start where the Wissahickon Creek meets the Schuylkill River. We will learn Philadelphia Canoe Club history while appreciating seasonal changes along the creek. Winter is the perfect time to get outside. Dress in layers.

Trails Less Traveled III: Bushwhacking in Andorra with Gerry Schweiger
Monday, December 26 • 1 - 3:30 pm
Meet at The Cedars House, Northwestern Ave. and Forbidden Drive. (GPS directions do not work for this site.)
We will visit some of the Andorra Meadow’s many attractions, including the highest elevation in the park, the Andorra Run watershed, the deer exclusion, and the old Bells Mill Trail, which provides a view of the park prevalent in the 1980s. NOTE: Many brambles and thorny plants border the trails; wear leather gloves. Distance: 3 miles. Level: challenging.

A Holiday Season Winter Walk with Bruce Wagner
Wednesday, December 28 • 10 am - noon
Meet at The Cedars House, Northwestern Ave. and Forbidden Drive. (GPS directions do not work for this site.)
In the midst of the holiday season, what better way to get away from the noise and crowds than to take a walk in the woods. We will hike from The Cedars House to the Covered Bridge, taking either the Orange Trail or Forbidden Drive, depending on weather. Wear clothes appropriate for the weather. Distance: 1 mile. Level: moderate.

TRAILS LESS TRAVELED VIII: Blue Bells and Hotels with Gerry Schweiger
Sunday, January 15 • 1 - 3 pm
Meet at the parking lot kiosk at Blue Bell (Hill) Park.
Blue Bell Hill has several unique trails climbing its shoulders. We will hike two of those trails as well as two little used trails off of Rittenhouse St. that touch the properties of Victorian inns and hotels that once fronted Lincoln Drive. We will also visit Historic Rittenhouse Town. Distance: 3 miles. Level: moderate, but will cross two streets with traffic.

Keeping Up With the Trail Ambassadors
Photo courtesy of Quyen Do.
Friends of the Wissahickon • Winter 2016

We’ll Do What We Can with Bruce Wagner
Sunday, January 22 • 10 - 12 am
Meet at The Cedars House, Northwestern Ave. and Forbidden Drive. (GPS directions do not work for this site.)

The middle of January can be very snowy. The Farmer’s Almanac forecasts lots of snow, but says it will be warm this spring. Confusing? So this walk will be on easy terrain, but it might be icy, it might be beautiful, and it might be a walk in the open woods. Come enjoy whatever the winter gives us. Dress in layers and wear appropriate footwear. Level: easy/moderate.

Wissahickon Geology with Jeff Frazier
Saturday, February 11 • 10 am - noon
Meet at The Cedars House, Northwestern Ave. and Forbidden Drive. (GPS directions do not work for this site.)

Learn through a slide presentation about the theories of what caused the rocks of the Wissahickon Gorge to be formed and why they are currently exposed at the earth’s surface. Then explore Wissahickon schist, with its intricate and beautiful patterns; view stream characteristics such as cut banks and deposition bars; and learn how movement of rock particles through erosion processes have shaped the landscape. Level: easy.

Winter Scavenger Hunt with Bruce Wagner
Sunday, February 12 • 10 - noon
Meet at Valley Green Inn.

When the leaves are gone, and maybe the snow has covered the ground, can you still find interesting stuff? You betcha! We will spend two hours on a scavenger hunt in an area limited to a half mile. Objects to be found may be obvious, whimsical, or even mysterious. Proof of discovery will be by smart phone so even those with limited mobility are invited. Registration is required for this hike.

Woods and Meadow Hike with Kimberly Quinn
Sunday, March 19 • noon - 2 pm
Meet at The Cedars House, Northwestern Ave. and Forbidden Drive. (GPS directions do not work for this site.)

Wish about 3 miles through woods to the Andorra Meadow and then to the Wissahickon Environmental Center on return. Learn about the former Andorra Nursery, visit the Tree House, and see the Great Beech and Fallen Magnolia. Level: moderate.

Spring Equinox Wissahickon Walk with Kris Soffa
Monday, March 20 • 10 am - noon
Meet at The Cedars House, Northwestern Ave. and Forbidden Drive. (GPS directions do not work for this site.)

Welcome spring with a brisk walk in the Wissahickon with PA Master Naturalist Kris Soffa. We will find signs of emerging new growth everywhere. The woods echo with birdsong, spring ephemerals bloom, and trout splash in the creek. Swelling tree buds and newly opened leaves bathe our deciduous woods in a gorgeous chartreuse haze. Why not get your dose of nature and join us for this energizing walk? Distance: 2 miles.

TRAILS LESS TRAVELED IV: Icons of the Lower Wissahickon with Gerry Schweiger
Sunday, March 26 • 1 - 3:45 pm
Meet at the parking lot on Gypsy Lane near northbound Lincoln Drive, opposite Wissahickon Hall.

Most park users visit the points of interest along Forbidden Drive. We will visit lesser-known places in the lower valley including Historic RittenhouseTown, the 100 Steps, Hermit’s Cave, and Lover’s Leap. Level: difficult with several strenuous climbs. Distance: 4.25 miles.

TALKS

The Cedars House on Sundays at 2 pm

Introduction to Back Packing with Erica Lynes
December 18
Learn what kind of gear you need for backpacking; how to use a water filter and camp stove; how to hang a bear bag; how to hike with a heavy load; and how to follow leave-no-trace principles.

Post Holiday Progressive Relaxation with Kevin Elkov
January 15
Experience an after-holiday stress buster (Yoga Nidra) utilizing progressive relaxation in which individuals lie down with a pillow and a blanket and listen as Kevin Elkov takes you on a journey of total relaxation to relieve stress. He has been teaching progressive relaxation since the early 1980s. Bring a pillow and three blankets.

Winter Ice Is More Than White with Bruce Wagner
February 5
If it’s a good winter it might be bright and lovely with snow and ice everywhere, but after a while it all looks alike: white, white, white. Bruce Wagner has created a slide show that enhances the many colors of white present in winter.

Butterfly Basics: Building your own Pollinator Garden with Kris Soffa
March 5
Spring is the perfect time to transform your landscape into a haven for these gorgeous native pollinators. In this class you will learn basic butterfly habitat guidelines, like the benefits of pairing host plants. With a little practice, you will quickly be able to identify local butterflies and better appreciate their role as a bio-indicator species. We will discuss butterfly biology, how to raise butterflies at home, and other fascinating facts about these brilliant insects.

Understanding Horses: with Cynthia Turecki
March 12
Have you ever wondered how a horse thinks and communicates? This presentation will help you understand the horse’s point of view. Learn how a horse sees its surroundings and thinks.

Bugs: A Naive Whimsical Collection of Photos of Small Creatures with Bruce Wagner
March 26
In Bruce Wagner’s words: “I show some pretty pictures, but the afternoon’s entertainment is about sharing expertise. We need lots of creature identification experts to identify the critters in the pictures and learn what’s in our park!”

Contemplative Forest Walk with Sarah Gabriel
Saturday, March 4 • 12:30 - 3 pm
Meeting place will be sent to participants who register.

Slow down, get quiet, activate all your senses, and reap the proven benefits* of spending time in the woods with Shinrin-Yoku or Forest Bathing. (Visit phillyshinrinyoku.org to learn more.) Bring an open mind and playful spirit, a journal or notebook, and something to sit on. Be prepared to turn your phone off for a few hours. Participants on previous walks have reported better sleep and a sense of calm that lasted for days. We won’t be walking very far so even those with limited mobility are invited. Registration is required for this hike.
Every year it’s the same: Whispers Along the Wissahickon sells out in record time, and those who get their tickets early are thankful they did. Families enjoy a variety of fun activities, from balloon animals and face painting to hayrides and a nighttime hike. Thanks to Tony Croasdale of the Wissahickon Environmental Center for leading children on this nighttime adventure through the Andorra Natural Area.

Whispers Along the Wissahickon would not be such a popular fall tradition without the help of FOW’s dedicated volunteers. FOW relies on them for helping with set-up, staffing tables and activities during the event, and cleanup. Thanks to everyone who helped us make this fun-filled event a huge success!

THANKS TO OUR VOLUNTEERS

RICHARD BERMAN • JEFF CLARK
TONY DEFAZIO • JENNY FAIR
DAVID FERNLEY • ERICA LYNES
MARY PHALAN • MERRITT RHOAD
FRANK TUPLIN • CYNTHIA TURECK
WENDY WILLARD

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With additional support from
Friends of the Wissahickon • Winter 2016

UP AT THE TREE HOUSE

By Tony Croasdale, Wissahickon Environmental Center

You may think that the cold of winter would lay waste to a six-grain bird. However, birds do very well in the cold. Bird feathers are extremely efficient insulation, and the blood vessels in bird legs utilize an efficient countercurrent heat exchange system that keeps them from freezing, even when they stand on bare ice. In fact, the limiting factor for birds in winter is food.

Most insectivorous birds migrate to warmer regions where they can find invertebrate prey during the northern winter. Some travel to the Southeastern United States, and others go as far as South America. Aquatic birds also migrate, but mostly just one step ahead of ice. For seed-eating (granivorous) birds like song sparrows and cardinals, there is plenty to fuel their furnace, even in the depths of winter. Likewise, woodpeckers can find grubs in sapwood, tiny kinglets, brown creepers, and wrens can feed on dormant invertebrates, and birds of prey feed on rodents and other birds. Wissahickon Valley Park has many year-round resident birds, including quite a few for which our beloved valley might as well be a tropical paradise, full of the necessities of life in all seasons of the year.

The boreal forest, a vast boggy landscape of spruce, fir, and birch trees, runs from the Northern Appalachians to Newfoundland, and west across Central Canada to the Alaska Interior. Breeding birds of the boreal forest, including dark-eyed juncos and white-throated sparrows, arrive in our area in October and depart in early May. They are extremely numerous in the Wissahickon and in wooded backyards and lots. Yellow-bellied sapuckers also winter in our region, and they are aptly named. Look closely and you can find their parallel rows of holes hammered into the sapwood of trees, especially magnolias and sugar maples, an ample food supply during the cold winter months. For sparrows and American tree sparrows are also regular visiting boreal birds, and Andorra and Houston Meadows are good spots to look for them.

The boreal forest has year-round residents as well. Sometimes when spruce cones and birch cones are scarce, these birds will irrupt south to take advantage of decent substitutes: hemlock cones and river birch seeds. This fall has brought a good number of red-breasted nuthatches, purple finches, and black-capped chickadees to the park, joining our resident white-breasted nuthatches, American goldfinches, and Carolina chickadees. Without tracking individual birds, we cannot know whether these birds are breeders in the Appalachians or farther north. Their arrival in Philadelphia is often a harbinger of the irruption of other boreal “finches” like pine siskins, common redpolls, white-winged crossbills, red crossbills, evening grosbeaks, and pine grosbeaks.

There is some indication that this may be an irruption year, so keep a lookout for these birds. They are so dependent on certain trees and shrubs that it is possible to predict their movements. A renowned ecologist even makes a winter finch forecast (visit http://ebird.org/content/canada/news/ron-pittaways-winter-finch-forecast-2016-2017). The Tree House feeders, conifers of the Andorra Natural Area, birches of Houston Meadow, hemlocks along Forbidden Drive, and white pines of the Cresheim Valley are likely places to find winter finches.

The winter has one clear advantage for bird observation: barren trees. During the winter, owls are much easier to find because they concentrate in conifers and the holes they roost in are not obscured by leaves. Bluebirds wander from the meadow into the woods, and the mighty pileated woodpecker is much easier to track down by its calls without dense foliage. Bundle up and get out this winter. There is still much to see, and the seeing is easier!

Tony Croasdale is an Environmental Education Planner at Philadelphia Parks & Recreation.

A TRIBUTE TO DAVID BOWER

VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR AT PHILADELPHIA PARKS & RECREATION

By David Dannenberg, FOW Board Member

If you haven’t met David Bower, you probably have seen him. For the past two decades he could be found throughout Wissahickon Valley Park, standing at the apex of a group of volunteers or bent to hard work with a heavy implement. At six-and-a-half feet tall, he is easy to spot, as he stands higher than the cab of his well-worn, city-issued truck. Throughout his career with Philadelphia Parks & Recreation (PPR), David Bower’s passion and indefatigable work ethic have been inspirational.

I have had the privilege of working with him for over 15 years. We led Crefeld School students in over 400 projects in the Wissahickon—just one of David’s many working relationships with local elementary, high school, and college students. He also led corporate groups, clubs, park friends groups, and individuals in work projects, eagerly lending his advice, tools, equipment, and connections to almost every group that asked him to facilitate a worthwhile project connected with the Wissahickon.

David possesses an unparalleled combination of physical and interpersonal skills that he applied to create effective, safe, convivial work environments across a wide variety of sometimes physically challenging situations. He equally managed the spirit, skills, and attention spans of small children, teens, millennials, and retirees (often simultaneously) so that everyone safely worked to his or her capacity and felt a sense of accomplishment.

At the beginning of every work project he delivered an informal talk that mixed the right amount of humor, sternness, and intellect to give the job context and the workers a sense of purpose and direction. During the project he led by example, often side by side with the volunteers. At the end of the project, he gathered the group together, summarized the work completed and its impact on people and the environment, and thanked the participants. Although he followed a protocol, his conversation with volunteers never seemed canned.

His success could be gauged in part by the number of volunteers that regularly worked with him and the organizations that turned to him for support and advice. He helped train and mentor at least three volunteer coordinators and countless volunteer crew leaders for FOW. He no doubt did the same for PPR volunteer coordinators as well.

Astonishingly, when he was not working with groups of volunteers, he could often be spotted working alone, even after work hours. Perhaps he had noticed or been alerted to a pile of debris left near the park and had undertaken to deal with it himself. Or maybe there was a sidewalk adjacent to the park that needed to be cleared, or a vine to be cut. A self-starter, when he saw something that needed doing, he often just did it.

David’s contributions were not limited to physical labor. On his own time, he attended more committee and volunteer group meetings than any one person could reasonably be expected to endure. At these meetings he shared his valuable ideas and perspective to guide the policy, strategy, and work that these groups do for the betterment of the park and the public’s experience. For over ten years he was present at every important committee meeting at FOW. He consulted with Wissahickon East, Wissahickon Restoration Volunteers, Friends of Cresheim Trail, Friends of Vernon Park, West Mount Airy Neighbors, and countless other organizations.

Those of us who know and depend on the support of David’s work, expertise, and companionship have anticipated his retirement as kind of a pending catastrophe. We needn’t have. His intention is to continue to work in the park as a volunteer several days per week. We should all be so lucky and so wise to do what we love and love what we do.

PHILADELPHIA PARKS & RECREATION

VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR AT PHILADELPHIA PARKS & RECREATION

By David Dannenberg, FOW Board Member

You may think that the cold of winter would lay waste to a six-grain bird. However, birds do very well in the cold. Bird feathers are extremely efficient insulation, and the blood vessels in bird legs utilize an efficient countercurrent heat exchange system that keeps them from freezing, even when they stand on bare ice. In fact, the limiting factor for birds in winter is food.

Most insectivorous birds migrate to warmer regions where they can find invertebrate prey during the northern winter. Some travel to the Southeastern United States, and others go as far as South America. Aquatic birds also migrate, but mostly just one step ahead of ice. For seed-eating (granivorous) birds like song sparrows and cardinals, there is plenty to fuel their furnace, even in the depths of winter. Likewise, woodpeckers can find grubs in sapwood, tiny kinglets, brown creepers, and wrens can feed on dormant invertebrates, and birds of prey feed on rodents and other birds. Wissahickon Valley Park has many year-round resident birds, including quite a few for which our beloved valley might as well be a tropical paradise, full of the necessities of life in all seasons of the year.

The boreal forest, a vast boggy landscape of spruce, fir, and birch trees, runs from the Northern Appalachians to Newfoundland, and west across Central Canada to the Alaska Interior. Breeding birds of the boreal forest, including dark-eyed juncos and white-throated sparrows, arrive in our area in October and depart in early May. They are extremely numerous in the Wissahickon and in wooded backyards and lots. Yellow-bellied sapuckers also winter in our region, and they are aptly named. Look closely and you can find their parallel rows of holes hammered into the sapwood of trees, especially magnolias and sugar maples, an ample food supply during the cold winter months. For sparrows and American tree sparrows are also regular visiting boreal birds, and Andorra and Houston Meadows are good spots to look for them.

The boreal forest has year-round residents as well. Sometimes when spruce cones and birch cones are scarce, these birds will irrupt south to take advantage of decent substitutes: hemlock cones and river birch seeds. This fall has brought a good number of red-breasted nuthatches, purple finches, and black-capped chickadees to the park, joining our resident white-breasted nuthatches, American goldfinches, and Carolina chickadees. Without tracking individual birds, we cannot know whether these birds are breeders in the Appalachians or farther north. Their arrival in Philadelphia is often a harbinger of the irruption of other boreal “finches” like pine siskins, common redpolls, white-winged crossbills, red crossbills, evening grosbeaks, and pine grosbeaks.

There is some indication that this may be an irruption year, so keep a lookout for these birds. They are so dependent on certain trees and shrubs that it is possible to predict their movements. A renowned ecologist even makes a winter finch forecast (visit http://ebird.org/content/canada/news/ron-pittaways-winter-finch-forecast-2016-2017). The Tree House feeders, conifers of the Andorra Natural Area, birches of Houston Meadow, hemlocks along Forbidden Drive, and white pines of the Cresheim Valley are likely places to find winter finches.

The winter has one clear advantage for bird observation: barren trees. During the winter, owls are much easier to find because they concentrate in conifers and the holes they roost in are not obscured by leaves. Bluebirds wander from the meadow into the woods, and the mighty pileated woodpecker is much easier to track down by its calls without dense foliage. Bundle up and get out this winter. There is still much to see, and the seeing is easier!

Tony Croasdale is an Environmental Education Planner at Philadelphia Parks & Recreation.
Get Your Copy of
GOOD NIGHT WISSAHICKON VALLEY PARK

Good Night Wissahickon Valley Park is a children’s book sure to delight preschoolers and their parents. FOW celebrated its publication with a party on September 10 at the Wissahickon Environmental Center. This brightly colored picture book takes children on a hike through Philadelphia’s Wissahickon Valley Park. It is sure to become your child’s favorite bedtime story!

Purchase price: $9.95 plus shipping & handling.
Order at fow.org/good-night-wissahickon/.
Join or renew your FOW membership at the family level or above and get Good Night Wissahickon FREE! Visit fow.org/membership-donations!

On June 8, at the 23rd Annual Preservation Alliance Achievement Awards, the restoration of the Wissahickon Environmental Center (Andorra Tree House), financed by Friends of the Wissahickon, was awarded the Grand Jury Award.

When the proprietor of The Cedars House Café on Forbidden Drive approached the FPC to rehabilitate the cottage for use as a fitness café and event venue, we worked with FOW to develop a new amenity that fit within FOW’s daunting task of preserving the forever-wild feeling of the Wissahickon. Thoughtful discussion and planning between our organizations and the proprietor developed a new location that provides an inviting space to rest and enjoy delicious, healthy food amongst the stately cedar trees surrounding the café.

Support was asked for and secured from FOW when the Conservancy proposed leasing the historic Glen Fern property to a new tenant, Interpret Green, for use as an office and residence. The new tenant provides long-term security for the building, which dates back to 1740, and the low-impact office use fits well with the ecologically sensitive landscape. Interpret Green provides a full-time presence at the site and additional security for this area, which is the main gateway to the popular Devil’s Pool destination.

In 2015 FOW, Philadelphia Parks & Recreation, and the FPC collaborated on the rehabilitation of the Wissahickon Environmental Center (WEC), located in the Andorra Natural Area of Wissahickon Valley Park. The restoration included repairs to the main building and construction of a new porch, which provides a visual reference to the famous tree that once grew through the porch roof. The new porch offers handicapped accessible, outdoor classroom space that greatly expands the capacity for programming.

Lucy Strackhouse is Senior Director of Preservation & Project Management at the Fairmount Park Conservancy.
Trail Ambassador Walks

Registration is recommended for all walks (required if indicated) so that participants can be informed of weather or other emergency cancellations. Unless otherwise specified, Trail Ambassador Walks may be on rocky, rugged trails that may be wet and slippery. Wear sturdy shoes or boots. Long pants are recommended. Weather conditions may last longer than indicated. Snacks are available at the trailhead. In case of rain, the hike will be postponed or canceled. All hikes may cross city streets. Rain or icy conditions. Community walks are held at 1 pm on the 3rd Sunday of the month. Contact: 215-488-0472, bruce.mel@verizon.net.

MORE INFORMATION ON PP. 14-15 AND AT FOW.ORG.

Appalachian Mountain Club
Delaware Valley Chapter
amcdv.org

Mondays

Wissahickon Gorge Wandering. A brisk-paced hike of 5-7 miles on various trails throughout the Wissahickon Gorge. The distance of the hike will be dependent on conditions and speed of the group. Meet at 6:30 pm by Valley Green Inn. Bring water, snacks, and a flashlight. Bad weather cancels. If doubtful, please check the status of the hike before 5:30 pm at www.amcdv.org/AMCCalendar.php or contact the leader: David Stein, 215-508-5915. Dec. 12, 19, 26.

Tuesdays

Tuesday Nights in the Wissahickon. Casual social hike through hills of Wissahickon Gorge. Bring water and a flashlight or headlamp. Always an option for dinner following the hike. Meet at Bruno's, at the corner of Germantown and Northwestern Aves. at 6:30 pm. Nasty weather will cancel the hike. If doubtful check the status of the hike at www.amcdv.org/AMCCalendar.php or contact a Leader: David Stein, 215-508-5915; Pat Naismith, 610-639-3670. Dec. 13, 20, 27.

Philaventures
philaventures.org

Sundays

Last Sunday of Month Wissahickon Hike. An opportunity to walk at a moderate pace with a talkative group of LGBT folks who like fresh air and exercise. Some ups and downs and uneven paths are found along the way, so wear proper footwear and be ready to hike. Meet at 2:00 pm at Cosimo's Pizza, 8624 Germantown Ave. at Bethlehem Pike (the top of Chestnut Hill). Registration with the hike leader is required: Bert G. at bert12345@comcast.net.

Batona Hiking Club
batonahikingclub.org

Sunday, January 1

Wissahickon Creek Gorge with Audubon. 5-6 miles. Meet at Valley Green Inn at 1 pm for our annual New Year's Day hike through this spectacular gorge. There are parking lots at the bottom of Wises Mill Rd. and along Valley Green Rd. From here, walk down the hill to Valley Green Inn. This is a combined hike with Valley Forge Audubon. An optional “Dutch Treat Dinner” at the Yu Hsiang Gardens Two, 7630 Germantown Ave. will follow the hike. Leaders: Gary Rigg, 610-716-7854; Michael Alger, 215-233-0916, ansileik@bt.com.

Sunday, January 8

City Hall to Chestnut Hill. 16-17 miles. Depart from corner of 16th & JFK Blvd. at 8:30 am. Return to Philadelphia by train at the end of the day. Hikers may take the Chestnut Hill West train into the city to start the hike. A classic, traditional Batona winter hike. Terrain is level to rocky and hilly. For those who are interested there will be a stop at a local Chestnut Hill brew pub following the hike. Ice or heavily accumulating snow cancels. Cost: $1 plus train fare. Leader: Bruce Melgy, 215-488-0472. bruce.mel@verizon.net.

Sunday, January 29

Hills of the Wissahickon. 7 or 13 miles, your choice. Meet at 9:30 am at Valley Green Inn. Come out for a great long (2 loops) or short (1 loop) hike. The first loop is about 7 miles and the second loop is 6 miles. Several hills have steep climbs, including some with elevation increases up to 300 feet. Bring lunch and water. Lunch will be during the first loop before returning to Valley Green. If you need transportation, take the Chestnut Hill West Regional Rail Line. Exit at Saint Martin's station and walk to Springfield Ave. Call leader by 6 pm Saturday evening for pickup on Springfield Ave. at 9 am. Cost: $1. Leader: Barry Shapiro, 215-673-4717.
Friends of the Wissahickon Valley Watershed Association (FOW) offers many public programs as part of its mission to protect the quality and beauty of the Wissahickon Creek and to enhance life in the Wissahickon Watershed. Located at 12 Morris Road in Ambler, More info at: fow.org

Friends of the Wissahickon Valley Watershed Association

MEMBERSHIP LEVEL

- $20 Limited Income/Students
- $45 Basic
- $100 Contributing*
- $250 Sponsor*
- $575 Family*
- $500 Patron*
- $1,000 Society of Generous Friends*
- $2,500
- $5,000
- $10,000 or above

*Choice of:
- Hat
- Good Night Wissahickon Valley Park
- Please keep the premium and use the entire membership fee for the Park.

T-Shirt (circle size)
- Children: S M L
- Red Bird: Women S M • Adult L XL
- Warbler & Map: Adult L XL

All new members receive a map of the Wissahickon Valley. Limited Income/Student members receive invitations to all events and our quarterly newsletter. Basic members receive invitations to all events, our quarterly newsletter, calendar, and membership card with discounts for meals at Valley Green Inn (in the park) and FOW merchandise. Family members receive all benefits of Basic membership plus choice of two kids tee or OR white children’s books and membership and above ($100 or more) receive all benefits of Basic membership plus choice of hat OR T-shirt OR one children’s book.

Method of Payment
- Check Enclosed (payable to Friends of the Wissahickon)
- Charge my
- VISA Mastercard
- AmX Discover

Please return to: 40 W. Evergreen Ave., Suite 108, Philadelphia, PA 19118-3324 • tel 215-247-0417 • office@fow.org • fow.org

Contributions to Friends are tax deductible as permitted by current law. The official registration and financial information may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling, toll free, within Pennsylvania (800) 732-0999.

Community Outreach
- Trail Repair
- Cleanup
- Wildlife
- Education
- Vine Removal

Future calendar listings for the newsletter may be placed by contacting Friends of the Wissahickon at 215-247-0417 or office@fow.org. The Calendar of Events in the Wissahickon may also be viewed on FOW’s website fow.org/events, which contains updates on our events, including cancellations.