Forbidden Drive Named Trail of the Year 2018
(see p. 3)
A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

As a member of FOW’s Board of Directors since 2007, and now its president, I know first-hand how important Friends of the Wissahickon is to the survival of the park. FOW partners with 40 or more organizations and one thousand volunteers a year, including 15-20 volunteer groups who contribute over 14,000 hours annually toward maintaining the park. We confirmed our commitment to work with the community to preserve the Wissahickon with our Strategic Blueprint 2018-2020, presented to the public with a pullout in our last issue of the newsletter. This document outlines the three strategic priorities of FOW over the next three years: habitat, engagement, and infrastructure.

Throughout 2018 we plan to present pullouts in our newsletter focusing on each of these program areas. In this issue, we provide an overview of an infrastructure project that has long been the hallmark of FOW’s work in the park: the Sustainable Trails Initiative (STI). At a public meeting in January, Chris Bernhardt, a professional trail builder and one of the members of the original STI consulting team, shared his perspectives on the successes and challenges of STI and presented FOW’s ambitious plan to complete the project. The enclosed pullout, which outlines FOW’s plan, can be found on page 9.

On the cover we have announced that Forbidden Drive has been named 2018 Trail of the Year by the Pennsylvania Trails Advisory Committee of the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. FOW is looking forward to celebrating this honor throughout the coming year with all of you. Also in this issue is an article on FOW’s Green Stormwater Infrastructure (GSI) project in the Andorra Natural Area (p. 4). This project, funded by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, will mitigate damage from uncontrolled surface stormwater flows and greatly decrease sedimentation carried into the Wissahickon Creek, while greatly increasing the quality of the area around the Wissahickon Environmental Center and adjacent trails.

You may also notice in this issue the addition of several new staff members. Our volunteer coordinator Christina Anthony left FOW in December to pursue new interests, and Shawn Green, a former Trail Ambassador, has been hired to take her place. Cesali Renn is our new development and outreach assistant, and Laura Feragen, who has been serving as our publicist for the past year, is the new editor of our newsletter. FOW is fortunate that our former newsletter editor of twelve years, Denise Larrabee, will continue to work with us on special publication projects as senior editor.

Throughout this issue you will find articles about and references to our many volunteers: sawyers, Trail Ambassadors, Crew Leaders, and the volunteers who assist us at events and join us on our workdays, such as Martin Luther King Day in January. FOW celebrates and shows our gratitude for our volunteers every year in November (see the winter 2017 issue), but with National Volunteer Month being celebrated in April, we would like to call attention again to these dedicated park stewards and all they do for the Wissahickon. As the temperatures begin to rise, the birds begin to sing, and the park begins to beckon, please consider supporting the Wissahickon as a volunteer. While FOW is essential to the survival of the park, so are you!

Jeff Harbison
President

In this issue, we provide an overview of an infrastructure project that has long been the hallmark of FOW’s work in the park: the Sustainable Trails Initiative (STI). (p. 9)
CORRECTION

New data was secured after the winter newsletter went to press, and The All Trails Challenge Top Fundraiser Team listed in that issue was incorrect. The Top Fundraiser Team was PC Hikes from William Penn Charter School. They raised $1,530.

We also apologize for running the incorrect interview in our ATC Challenger Close-Up in the winter issue. You can find the ATC Top Fundraiser Gene Bishop’s correct interview on p. 18.

CRESHEIM TRAIL UPDATE

Philadelphia City Council enacted a bill in December 2017 introduced by Councilwoman Cindy Bass that authorizes the City to acquire the train trestle over Germantown Avenue (near the Trolley Car Diner) and lease the right-of-way from PECO, which owns the trestle. This will complete the Philadelphia portion of the Cresheim Trail. Beyond Philadelphia, the trail is planned to continue six miles through the Montgomery County townships of Cheltenham and Springfield, where it will connect with the Green Ribbon Trail (Wissahickon Trail) in Flourtown. When completed, the Cresheim Trail will close the loop on this important intercounty connection of Circuit Trails, a 750+ mile regional trail system throughout the Delaware Valley.

READ THIS!

Germantown-based author and hiking expert (and FOW member) Lori Litchman lists Wissahickon Valley Park’s upper trails as #9 in her latest book 60 Hikes Within 60 Miles: Philadelphia, now in its second edition. Litchman, who includes surrounding counties and outlying areas of New Jersey and Delaware, also highlights lower trails, Hermit Lane Trail, and the Lavender and Orange Trails of the Wissahickon in this guide that includes where to hike, what to expect, and how to get there. A photo of Forbidden Drive graces the cover!

FORBIDDEN DRIVE NAMED 2018 TRAIL OF THE YEAR!

The Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) has named Forbidden Drive the 2018 Trail of the Year! This trail designation is awarded by DCNR’s Pennsylvania Trails Advisory Committee to elevate public awareness of the thousands of miles of trails available for public enjoyment in Pennsylvania. In honor of the achievement, the committee and DCNR will work to produce a poster for statewide distribution and plan a public celebration. FOW will also be celebrating this award throughout 2018. Visit fow.org or join FOW’s Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter feeds to learn more!

RIDE ON

Thanks to the popularity of Wissahickon Valley Park among mountain bikers, Philadelphia was ranked fourth among Best Northeast Cities for Mountain Biking on REI’s MTB Project, a crowd-sourced trail guide and mapping resource. The ranking is based on total featured rides within 25 miles of metropolitan areas and number of votes on MTBProject.com.
WHAT’S GOING ON
IN THE WISSAHICKON

SPRING CONSTRUCTION
SCHEDULED AT ANDORRA
NATURAL AREA

WHAT TO EXPECT

Phase I of FOW’s Green Stormwater Infrastructure (GSI) project in the Andorra Natural Area is set to begin construction in mid-March and be completed by mid-June 2018. During this time, work zones will be closed to the public. This unique project, funded by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, takes a watershed approach to mitigating damage from uncontrolled surface stormwater flows originating from Northwestern Avenue and the adjacent minimally vegetated parkland. A series of GSI features designed to intercept, treat, convey, and infiltrate stormwater will greatly decrease sedimentation carried from this micro-watershed into the Wissahickon Creek, while greatly increasing the quality of the day-use area of the Wissahickon Environmental Center (WEC) and adjacent trails.

Throughout 2017 and into the winter of 2018, the environmental engineering firm A. D. Marble, based in King of Prussia, has guided the project from concept to final design. Their construction partners, Lancaster-based Flyway Excavating, is the contractor on site, turning the two-dimensional drawings into 3-D reality.

When completed, park visitors can expect to see an enlarged and revegetated basin at the upper parking lot with a series of vegetated rock cascades leading from the basin and down the hill through the forested canopy. At the WEC day-use area, visitors will enjoy a vegetated rain garden and swale leading to the existing wetland located downhill and along the drive from the WEC. This lower reach of the watershed is Phase II of the project and will be addressed at a later date.

Safety During Construction

FOW consulted with the Philadelphia Parks & Recreation staff at the WEC, District 4, and Natural Lands Restoration as we developed plans with the design and construction team to help ensure public safety and minimize impacts on park users during construction. With that in mind, FOW asks visitors to the Andorra Natural Area during the construction period to stay out of the work zone and heed safety signage at all times—even if the crew is not working.

Areas of Impact During Construction

The work zone will be closed to the public from mid-March to mid-June 2018. Below is a list of information on closures impacting park users, and updates can be found at fow.org and FOW’s Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram feeds.

• Northwestern Avenue at the Upper Parking Lot
  Work will be underway for a few days during the construction period on Northwestern Avenue just above the parking lot entrance, and the lot will be closed to all vehicle traffic.

• Upper Parking Lot
  During construction, the upper parking lot above the WEC on Northwestern Avenue will be closed to vehicles since it will be the main staging area for the project and will be used for material stockpiles and equipment.

• Bike Bypass
  This trail will be closed during construction.

Areas NOT Impacted During Construction

The following park amenities at or near the work zone will not be impacted during construction. Nevertheless, be aware that construction is underway nearby, and any related safety signage should still be followed.

• Northwestern Avenue at the Upper Parking Lot

• Red Forest Loop and Connector Trail
  This old rocky roadbed that runs behind the WEC and along the edge of the day-use area will not be impacted during construction, except for a few specific days based on the construction schedule. From the WEC, this trail will provide the most direct route to Andorra Meadow.

• Wissahickon Environmental Center and Lower Parking Lot
  The WEC and public restrooms will be open during normal hours throughout the construction period. The access road from Forbidden Drive and the associated parking lot will also be open during this time.

LOOKING FOR A SUMMER JOB?

FOW will be hiring seasonal field work and outreach assistants to carry out various tasks in Wissahickon Valley Park over the summer of 2018. These temporary positions are primarily field based, and applicants should be comfortable with spending long periods of time outdoors in all weather conditions. Visit fow.org beginning in early April 2018 for detailed job descriptions and an application form.
FALLEN TREES?

FOW VOLUNTEER SAWYERS TO THE RESCUE

Ever wonder how fallen trees are cleared from trails? Tree falls are an unfortunate and common occurrence in the Wissahickon, and most park users have seen the impact of large fallen canopy trees throughout the park, which sometimes block the very trail on which they are hiking. What to do? Climb over? Under? Go around? Turn back? Depending on the situation, options can be limited and often hazardous.

Since 2013, FOW has partnered with Philadelphia Parks & Recreation to keep the upper trails clear of fallen trees. If you have been lucky enough to come across the FOW volunteer Sawyer Crew while traveling on the upper trails, you know they are a highly skilled and dedicated group of trail stewards. In 2017 alone, they cleared over 50 fallen trees from the upper trails. The volunteer sawyers are a small subset of FOW’s volunteer Crew Leaders with specialized skills and training who have spent countless hours over the years doing this dangerous work without any injuries.

Led by sawyer Chuck Kirkland, this group of motivated and self-directed stewards are organized to rapidly respond to fallen tree alerts—often within 48 hours. In the depth of winter or the peak of summer, they haul 40, 50, sometimes 60 pounds of gear into the park to do their work. In addition to the physical challenges, clearing fallen trees poses numerous hazards, particularly on steep terrain.

Following the lead on-site sawyer, the crew assesses the situation together and plans a strategy. Job positions are assigned, responsibilities are reviewed, then the team goes to work to implement the plan. Last year, for the first time, FOW’s volunteer Trail Ambassadors were invited to assist the Sawyer Crew by acting as flaggers to intercept trail users before they reach the work zone. This has proven to be a great opportunity for outreach and public education, and, of course, ensures the safety of both the sawyers and trail users. FOW hopes to expand the ranks of Trail Ambassadors doing this work.

Early last December, FOW initiated a dedicated sawyer training program by engaging Kirkland as the official sawyer trainer to formalize and develop a two-day, sixteen-hour training. Attending the inaugural training were members of the Sawyer Crew, members of the Crew Leaders, and two FOW staff members. Over the two days, participants learned the following:

Safe Aware Working Standards (SAWS). This was an in-class review of every component of sawyer safety. Kirkland trained the crew on everything from communication in the field, public safety, and first aid response, to operational features of chainsaws, personal protective equipment and supplies, crew responsibilities, and unique challenges in the Wissahickon.

Field Application. Classroom lessons moved to the field as Kirkland demonstrated and attendees practiced how to handle and operate a chainsaw safely.

Volunteers who completed the two-day safety training and are not yet sawyers, are eligible to join the crew in the field. New volunteers continue to work under Kirkland’s direction to gain experience and skills at a slow but measured pace before they are eligible to officially join the ranks of the valiant FOW volunteer Sawyer Crew.

If you happen upon a tree fallen across a trail, please report it by doing the following: take a picture, pin it to a google map, and email it to FOW’s Field Operations Manager John Holback (holback@fow.org). We need to know the exact location and be able to assess the size and difficulty of the removal job in order to promptly and safely clear the tree from the trail. If you are lucky enough to see the FOW Sawyer Crew in the park, heed safety signs, stay on the trail, and wait for the “okay” to proceed. Happy Trails!

SAFETY GUIDELINES

• Exercise with a partner; if exercising alone, avoid using the park during off-peak times.
• Vary your routine. Go at different times and start from different locations.
• When parking your car, lock doors, carry keys with you, and do not leave valuables in plain sight.
• Be alert and go headphone free! Headphones leave you vulnerable to physical injury and crime.
• If your car is broken into, call 911. Stay until the police arrive.
• Trust your instincts—if you sense trouble because of a person or a place, leave. Report any suspicious activity by calling 911.
• FOW posts crime alerts as necessary, so visit fow.org frequently.
• In the event of a crime, illness, or injury, help is readily available:
  › Help Locators are listed on new signs posted throughout the park at major trail intersections.
  › Philadelphia Park System Rangers who patrol the park to increase safety and enforce park regulations are available to respond quickly to any issues—call them at 215-685-2172.
  › If you are unable to call 911 or the Rangers, find an FOW Trail Ambassador (TA) for help or to report any problems.
• For any non-urgent issues (or to subscribe to get text updates), text WISS to 267-966-2207.
MORGAN SIMS

How do you volunteer with FOW?
Woodshop [Structures Crew], or “The Hive,” as some of the guys affectionately call it. We make trail signs, bird and bat houses, benches, picnic tables, fence railings, and whatever else the park needs.

What do you love about Wissahickon Valley Park?
There are so many things that I love about the park. What comes to mind first is an immense sense of pride. . . . I love that the park has such a strong community and so much history. I grew up running high school cross-country practices on the very trails I put wooden trail signs on now, among trees that have existed for hundreds of years, and I love that juxtaposition. Also, the fact that it is a National Natural Landmark which wraps around our city, is the perfect blend of old and new, suburban life and wildlife, . . . something I constantly brag about to all of my New York and other out-of-state friends.

What is one of your favorite moments from volunteering with FOW?
It’s hard to narrow down a favorite moment, as my favorite thing about volunteering with my group is that I learn something new every time I am there. They have given me more practical knowledge in a year than I have learned in a very long time and it leaves me feeling refreshed, curious, and grateful every time I am with them. One thing that was particularly exciting for me was helping hand make a bench for the front of the Valley Green Inn out of an oak tree that grew in the forest around it. Steve O’Kula is someone who I consider a mentor, and it’s an opportunity I am grateful for and adds to how much I enjoy the park each time I’m in it.

How do you think FOW contributes to the Philadelphia community?
I know that FOW contributes to the Philadelphia community not only by maintaining the park in a beautiful and responsible way, but also by creating opportunities for learning. I see school programs constantly taking advantage of the park’s natural and FOW-provided resources. I personally have learned so much about the history of the Philadelphia area, agriculture, wildlife, woodworking, and many other things purely by spending the day in Wissahickon Park. That experience is available for anyone, thanks to FOW and the impact it has on making the Wissahickon safe, healthy, and welcoming for the Philadelphia community.

What is your favorite spot in the park?
My favorite spot in the park, hands down, is the Tree House. I love the woodshop and the history and personality that it has. I love the huge trees, the people, and, of course, Tommy, the cat. Walking into the Tree House catapulted me into becoming a part of FOW and the amazing experiences that I have had throughout my time so far with this team.

MORRIS PARK TRAIL BUILDING

Late last Summer, FOW was approached by Philadelphia Parks & Recreation (PPR) staff and Morris Park Restoration Volunteers (MPRV) about helping with a trail-building project in Morris Park. Morris Park is a beautiful chunk of woods located between City Avenue and Lansdowne Avenue starting at 66th Street that has historically been used mostly by folks in the Overbrook neighborhood. PPR and MPRV were concerned that the trails in the park, which had been more or less created socially, were not built in a sustainable way and could negatively impact the park by eroding into the creek and damaging the roots of some wonderfully huge and mature hickory and oak trees. Additionally, PPR and MPRV wanted to provide park users with a better trail experience. The current trail took them from the road to the creek (the east branch of the Indian Creek and one of Morris Park’s main attractions) as quickly as possible.

FOW staff and volunteer Crew Leaders Marc Snyder, Lisa Stout, and Joe Mikuliak spent two days building two sustainable trails totaling about 1,000 feet and closing the existing social trails. This project was a great opportunity for FOW Crew Leaders, as it allowed them to hone their mechanized trail building skills using a specific type of miniature trail bulldozer. The trails came out great and the neighbors are happy; some even came down to say thanks while we were finishing up. If you are looking for a new park to explore, pack a picnic (there is a nice big lawn next to the creek!) and visit Morris Park to see some FOW handiwork outside of the Wissahickon.
—John Holbach, Field Operations Manager
SPRING PARK CLEAN-UPS

After a long winter, it’s time for some spring cleaning in the park. FOW is looking for extra hands to help keep the trails safe and beautiful by removing tree debris and picking up trash at these specially-designated clean-up events:

SATURDAY, APRIL 7
Annual Philly Spring Clean-Up
9 am-1 pm

SATURDAY, APRIL 21
Earth Day Trail Work Day
9 am-1 pm

SATURDAY, APRIL 28
Annual Creek Clean-Up
9 am-11 am
Talkin’ Trash Picnic
11 am-1 pm

SATURDAY, MAY 12
Spring Love Your Park Day
9 am-1 pm

SATURDAY, JUNE 2
National Trails Day
Sprucing up Forbidden Drive
9 am-1 pm

Visit fow.org for more information and to register to volunteer.

MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY OF SERVICE

The weather was cold and grey on this year’s Martin Luther King Day, but that didn’t hinder the spirit of a dedicated crew of nearly 60 FOW volunteers who gathered to work on the grounds at the historic Thomas Mansion in Germantown.

This is the third consecutive MLK service day at which volunteers have helped clear invasive plants along the mansion’s driveway. The Victorian home was built in 1869 by George Clifford Thomas and his wife Caroline Sheeetz. Thomas left his estate to the City of Philadelphia when he died in 1907. The property, which once boasted beautifully landscaped gardens and a greenhouse, needs regular maintenance to keep it from becoming overgrown.

This annual project at Thomas Mansion not only helps preserve a piece of Philadelphia’s past, but also enables volunteers to give back to the park they love and its users. It is also a wonderful example of community at work.

FOW’S BLUEBIRD BOX PROGRAM

Historically nesting in naturally occurring cavities (think holes in trees), the eastern bluebird has been negatively affected by human development such as logging, fire suppression, and invasive species introduced since Europeans arrived and began settling in America. Due to these pressures, eastern bluebird populations declined during the twentieth century until humans decided to create a solution for a human-caused problem. In the latter part of the century, bluebird boxes and bluebird trails became popular which led to the increase in bluebird numbers. Thanks to nest box programs like FOW’s, the eastern bluebird is now a species of least concern. Huzzah!

FOW created and maintains two bluebird box trails in the park: one in Andorra Meadow and one in Houston Meadow. FOW volunteers play an essential role in the installation, monitoring, and maintenance of these trails. In the winter of 2016-17, a self-selected group of volunteers met at the Tree House for a bird box monitoring workshop where they learned how to collect data important in monitoring a bluebird trail. They toured both meadows to see where the boxes were located and learned how to use an easy digital survey to submit their findings. They reported on when a nest box became occupied, what species was occupying it, how many eggs were laid, and how many of those eggs hatched. They also watched for nest box predators and reported vandalism. Thanks to their efforts, we learned that two pairs of bluebirds successfully bred in Andorra Meadow, while one pair successfully nested in Houston Meadow. Using the information our volunteers gathered last year, we will be making some improvements to our trails so we can provide as many good breeding opportunities for bluebirds as possible.

Special thanks to all of our nest box watchers: Carol Beam, Jill Bialy, Joe Durrence, Shawn Green, Janet Lippincott, Lisa Myers, James Reiners, Marc Snyder, Emily Southerton, and Faith Watson.—John Holbach, Field Operations Manager

A female bluebird peeks out of an FOW bird box in the Andorra Meadow. Photo by Carol Beam.
WISSAHICKON DAY PARADE

Celebrate the history of Forbidden Drive at the 96th Annual Wissahickon Day Parade on Sunday, April 29, 2018. The oldest annual equine parade in the United States, it commemorates the 1920s-era protest responsible for the naming of Forbidden Drive.

The parade starts at 12:00 p.m. at Harper’s Meadow. The line-up begins at approximately 11:45 a.m., with carriages in front of the Northwestern Equestrian Facility (NWEF). Horseback riders will fall in line behind the carriages starting at Harper’s Meadow.

The parade will travel to Forbidden Drive and continue along the Drive to the judging area at Valley Green Inn. A pre-parade horse show begins at 10:00 a.m. at NWEF. Classes held in its outdoor arena include English, Western, Stable Group, and Carriages.

Sponsored by the Wissahickon Valley Riding and Driving Association, this family friendly event also features a Fancy Hat Contest (move over Kentucky Derby). Come join the celebration of equestrian activities, the Wissahickon Creek, and the preservation of this historical trail.

Show your love for the park!

SHOP.FOW.ORG

INTRODUCING NEW T-SHIRT DESIGNS

Copies still available and 10% off for new members

Kid’s frog T-shirt and book make great additions to an Easter basket!

SEE OTHER T-SHIRTS, HATS, CALENDARS, MAPS, AND MORE AT SHOP.FOW.ORG

TUESDAY, APRIL 17

BIRDS OF THE WISSAHICKON with RUTH PFEFFER

Join bird expert and photographer Ruth Pfeffer for an informative and fun program on our avian friends that reside, nest, or migrate through our beloved Wissahickon. There will be an emphasis on warblers and other songbirds that are returning from their southern wintering range.

Owner of Birding with Ruth, she is credited with creating the birding program at the Morris Arboretum where she is an instructor. Ruth has led birding expeditions throughout the Mid-Atlantic region and abroad since the 1990s, contributed to the Breeding Bird Atlas project in the 1980s, and is a member of the Delaware Valley Ornithological Club, The Academy of Natural Sciences, and Wyncote’s Audubon Society Board (for membership).

Ruth will lead a hike that complements this presentation on Saturday, May 12. Binoculars and field guides will be available. Meet at 8 a.m. at the concrete picnic tables at Bell’s Mill Road and Forbidden Drive. Registration for this hike is required as space is limited.

TUESDAY, MAY 15

THE GREEN AMENDMENT: SECURING OUR RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT with MAYA VAN ROSSUM

Environmental activist Maya van Rossum will discuss her new best-selling book, The Green Amendment, and how FOW members can become more engaged with environmental and water advocacy relating to the Wissahickon watershed. She is currently advancing The Green Amendment movement, seeking to secure constitutional protection for environmental rights nationwide. Maya has served as the Delaware Riverkeeper and leader for the Delaware Riverkeeper Network since 1994, and serves on a number of the region’s water quality committees. She is also a leader among her peers and currently serves as an Advisory Board member for the Clean Water Network, a convener of water protection organizations from across the nation.

Lectures begin at 6 p.m. at Valley Green Inn. They are free for FOW members (check your e-mail for your registration link or contact morrone@fow.org to register) and $10 for non-members. Registration is recommended as seating is limited. A complimentary wine and cheese reception is offered.
The Sustainable Trails Initiative (STI) is Friends of the Wissahickon's multistage, multiyear campaign that began in 2006. STI is aimed at creating a sustainable trail network through projects that shed water from the trail surface to limit erosion, protect the fragile forest habitat, improve the water quality of the creek, and enhance user experience throughout Wissahickon Valley Park. The work is funded by the William Penn Foundation, Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Pennsylvania Commonwealth Financing Authority-Department of Community and Economic Development, and multiple private donors.

In the last issue of the newsletter, we presented our Strategic Blueprint 2018-2020 which outlined three areas of strategic priority: infrastructure, engagement, and habitat. This new pullout feature explores in more detail one of those strategic priorities—infrastructure—as FOW moves toward the final phase of STI.

Inside this pullout is a snapshot of the five priority infrastructure projects FOW will be completing over the next three years. This is by no means the only trail-related work FOW will be completing on the trails—smaller projects and regular trail maintenance will continue—but these five projects have been identified as most critical and will be the most visible to park users. FOW membership dollars support every piece of this work, for which we continue to be grateful.
HOW WERE PROJECTS SELECTED?

In 2017, FOW retained Chris Bernhardt, professional trail builder and principal of Sentieros Consulting, to assess the effectiveness of STI thus far and to recommend the actions required in order to move the project to completion. He reviewed possible work against three facets of trail sustainability: fiscal, social, and environmental. More than a dozen other projects were considered and several were rejected when they did not satisfy all of Bernhardt’s three sustainability criteria. For example, a project may have fixed an erosion problem but removed connectivity, or was not cost-effective. Additionally, many projects were ruled out because they require action by municipal or utility agencies before FOW can address trail conditions.

The map presented here pinpoints the five recommended priority trail projects from north to south, and the suggested improvements at each site are outlined on the following page. Bernhardt conducted interviews with FOW staff and a range of stakeholders to enhance his assessment of the trails and to determine the final priority projects and recommended improvements. He presented his recommendations at FOW’s annual public projects meeting in January to introduce the five priority projects and solicit feedback from those in attendance.

Bernhardt highlighted the best practices followed by FOW: collaborating with stakeholders and implementing a “lessons learned” approach by first developing a plan, then putting it into action, and finally having a third party assess outcomes and give recommendations. According to Bernhardt, this process makes STI stand out nationally and positions the final priority projects for success. With the STI assessment report and priority projects in hand, FOW will be establishing a trails task force with stakeholder representatives to help guide project implementation.
The Priority Projects Overview

**The “Monster” Trail (a.k.a. “Heart Attack Hill” or “Suicide Hill”)**

*On the Yellow Trail heading south from West Bell’s Mills Road*

**Description:** The steep, loose, and rocky makeup of this trail has earned it many nicknames. However, while some trail users enjoy the physical and technical challenges of this segment, the majority find them to be a barrier to use. Because there is a large trailhead on West Bell’s Mill Road and an intersection with Forbidden Drive at the start of this trail, it is a popular access point to other, easier trails. Therefore, if this section were in better condition, more people could enjoy it.

**Recommended Improvement:** Starting at the Bell’s Mill parking lot at the connector trail to Forbidden Drive, FOW will install a new infiltration basin to address stormwater runoff; remove soil berms on the first leg of the trail to drain stormwater toward the Bell’s Mill Creek, not down the trail; and create a vegetative buffer on the lower part of the trail to filter sediment. The Yellow Trail “monster” starts just on the other side of the Bell’s Mill Creek. The lower trail segment will be armored to stabilize the tread and reduce erosion, while maintaining the current challenging alignment. Farther up the trail, a new contour reroute will be constructed to bypass the steepest and most erosive portion of the existing trail. By following the natural contours of the land and incorporating additional sustainable principles in construction, the reroute will rate highly in the three sustainability criteria categories.

**Orange Trail Rex-Valley Green Inn**

*The pedestrian-only section of the Orange Trail between Rex Avenue and Valley Green Road*

**Description:** This is one of the few spots in the park that is shielded from visual and audible distractions, giving visitors a true sense of solitude. Following along the stream bank, this trail provides a lovely experience for hikers and trail runners. This section of the Orange Trail has degraded over the past decade, due to increased use and heavy stormwater erosion that caused portions of the trail to collapse into the creek, and presents a safety hazard. There is also a considerable number of exposed rocks and roots on this trail.

**Recommended Improvement:** While most of the trail needs typical drainage work, there are several segments that are seeing obvious erosion, which, being so close to the creek, must be mitigated through the use of structures. These structures will span the root- and rock-heavy areas, as well as small drainage channels, and when thoughtfully designed, could become added features of interest in the park.

**Lower Cresheim Creek**

*Where the trail crosses the Cresheim Bridge*

**Description:** There are several problems on the Cresheim Creek Trail west of the McCallum Street Bridge. There is an underdeveloped passage beneath the bridge that regularly floods, as well as a steep section that is eroding.

**Recommended Improvement:** Improving this area will not only reduce sedimentation into the Cresheim Creek, but will enhance access between the new, high-quality, single-track mountain biking trail near upper Cresheim Valley Drive and the mainline trails along the Wissahickon. This trail work will link past and future trail modifications, including a much-needed bridge along the White Trail over the Cresheim Creek, and eliminate long-term, chronic efforts that would be required to maintain the trail in the floodplain and under the bridge. Since this is a scenic area, FOW is also going to build side trails directly down to the creek so that visitors can access the area more easily without having to walk through the floodplain.

**Jannette Street North-South**

*Part of the Yellow Trail on the Roxborough side of the park*

**Description:** The Yellow Trail in this area runs frequently over an old roadbed that is plagued by poor drainage. Over the years, berms have formed that prevent stormwater from flowing off the trail, resulting in deeply eroded trail sections.

**Recommended Improvement:** FOW will fill in the cuts and reconstruct sustainable contour trails on top of the revised terrain. After routine drainage work to reduce stormwater flow from the trail bed on the downhill side, small areas will be rock- armored as needed to improve sustainability on steep sections or where downhill drainage cannot be developed. FOW will also seal off the old, rarely used portion of the trail, fill it in with stockpiled soil (which reduces cost), and replant it with native vegetation. Improving this area will make a large section of trail better able to withstand bad weather year-round and improve the user experience for pedestrians, cyclists, and equestrians. It will also improve the ability of the trail to weather increased use from the adjacent neighborhood.

**East Falls**

*Between Ten Box and Ridge Avenue east of Lincoln Drive*

**Description:** This multiuse trail is underutilized and neglected. It is not even identified as part of one of the main trails even though it helps complete an off-road circumnavigation of the park. This project will attract volunteers looking to build a more challenging, technical trail for national caliber trail runners, and wanting to be trained by a professional trail builder. It presents an opportunity to develop expert-level, technical features for cyclists and trail runners, thereby reducing use in other areas of the park. This area could be used as a proving ground for trail building concepts before they are implemented into the rest of the trail system.

**Recommended Improvement:** Most of the work here involves routine maintenance and drainage. A priority is arming unsustainable trail segments to create steep, rocky, technical mountain bike features that reward skill and provide challenge. FOW will also create a new contour segment of trail south of Gypsy Lane and build a new landing box adjacent to the road. Additional work involves repairing two drainage crossings and creating a raised tread segment through a flat, wet area at the north end. The largest budget item will be the creation of a safe, sustainable trail structure at the south side of Gypsy Lane.

Wissahickon Valley Park gets more than 1.2 million visitors each year—more visitors annually per capita than any other park in Pennsylvania. As that traffic continues to take a toll on the trails, FOW’s park projects are more important than ever.
Wissahickon Valley Park comprises 1,800 acres in Philadelphia’s 10,500-acre park system. Established in 1868, the park provides 50+ multiuse natural surface trails for bikers, hikers, equestrians, and other park user groups. The Wissahickon Creek runs through the park’s entire seven-mile length, and Forbidden Drive, the primary multi-use trail, parallels the creek. The Wissahickon was designated a National Natural Landmark in 1964. Named a National Recreation Trail in 1975, Forbidden Drive has been selected 2018 Trail of the Year by the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. Situated on the Atlantic Flyway, the park serves as a vital wildlife corridor for native plant and wildlife. It provides a high quality outdoor recreation experience for citizens of the region, acts as an economic anchor in Northwest Philadelphia, and meets a significant public health mandate in preserving and protecting a drinking water source that serves nearly one third of all Philadelphians.

Friends of the Wissahickon (FOW), founded in 1924, is a 2,200-member nonprofit organization that works in partnership with Philadelphia Parks & Recreation to restore historical park structures, eliminate invasive plant species, monitor watershed management issues, and restore trails throughout the park. In 2015, FOW designed and installed a signage and wayfinding system to increase user safety and make the park more accessible to all visitors.

Steady growth in staff and capacity over the last decade allows FOW to execute large capital projects through the Sustainable Trails Initiative. In addition to the work outlined in this pullout, FOW is currently developing a long-term, park-wide habitat management plan with the Academy of Natural Sciences and is finalizing designs to repair three stream bank collapse sites along Forbidden Drive, with construction scheduled for fall 2018. Learn more at fow.org.
2018 BIENNIAL WISSAHICKON PHOTO CONTEST

FOW is teaming up with the Wissahickon Valley Watershed Association (WVWA) and, for the first time, the Woodmere Art Museum to present the Biennial Wissahickon Photo Contest. Here’s what you need to know:

- All photos entered in the contest must be taken within Wissahickon Valley Park, along the Green Ribbon Trail, or on one of the WVWA managed preserves.
- Categories are people, wildlife, landscape, and structures.
- Participants may enter up to four photos taken within the last three years.
- Prizes will be awarded for Best in Show, First Place in each category, and People’s Choice (chosen by Facebook voters).
- Any of the three co-hosting organizations may feature the winning photos online, in their printed materials, or on social media.
- Entries that do not comply with the rules will be disqualified.
- Photographs will not be returned.

The contest kicks off April 2, 2018, and the deadline for submissions is October 15, 2018. Winners will be announced October 29.

Visit fow.org for complete rules and details. Use this link to submit photos: http://ow.ly/HckB30hYAPx

LIBRARY NATURE PROGRAM OFFERS BIRDING BACKPACKS AND MORE

By JoAnne Woods, Free Library of Philadelphia

The Free Library of Philadelphia now offers Birding Backpacks for loan. Each bag contains a map, a copy of the Sibley Field Guide to Birds of Eastern North America, a BirdPhilly card (with website and organization information), trail maps to local parks, and a pair of Celestron Nature DX binoculars. The backpacks are now available at four library branches: Andorra, Cecil B. Moore, Cobbs Creek, and Widener. Adults with a library card in good standing can borrow a pack for three weeks at a time. Additionally, Kidnoculars are available for younger children.

The Free Library of Philadelphia’s Birding Backpack program has been made possible thanks to many partners, including Philadelphia Parks & Recreation, The Knight Foundation, and many others. Through a partnership with the Wissahickon Environmental Center (WEC), collaborative nature programming has been offered at the Andorra Library and in Wissahickon Valley Park. Last year, Tony Croasdale and Trish Fries of the WEC teamed up with the Andorra Library staff to offer nature programs to our patrons. At the winter birding lecture series, attendees learned the ins and outs of “Birding in Philadelphia,” our unique biodiverse city, “Birding for Beginners,” and “Birding by Ear.” An outdoor teen summer reading book club was offered that included book discussions, hiking, birding, creek exploration, botany, fire building, and bug identification. Outdoor nature story-times were also offered at the WEC.

Why are we doing this? Environmental education benefits everyone. Learning about birds and the environment can inspire people to take action. When individuals develop affection for nature and learn that their everyday actions have an effect on the environment, they often make changes to their daily habits, recycle more, become aware of their use of natural resources, and, hopefully, influence others to do the same.

JoAnne Woods is Branch Manager of the Andorra Library, part of the Free Library of Philadelphia. Visit freelibrary.org for upcoming programs and events.

SAVE THE DATE

ANNUAL FOW MEMBERS MEETING

TUESDAY, JUNE 5 • 6 PM • VALLEY GREEN INN

FOW members are invited to review the past year, elect members to the Board of Directors, and learn about upcoming projects at this annual event. Members who attend the meeting will receive a printed copy of the FOW 2017 Annual Report. Light refreshments and hors d’oeuvres will be offered. Space is limited and registration is recommended. Please email Giulia Morrone at morrone@fow.org to register.
Hotels, Cabins, Inns, & Bridges with Kimberly Quinn
Saturdays, March 24, April 14, May 12
1-3 pm
Meet at the Crefeld Street trailhead.
With this hike you get a little bit of everything! We'll explore 3+ miles of trails and start at the Lavender Trail in Chestnut Hill, connect to the White Trail to visit the Indian Statue, cross over the Rex Ave. Bridge onto Forbidden Drive, and cross over the Covered Bridge. From here we'll explore the Orange Trail and return to the Lavender Trail. Learn about the history of bridges, Depression Era trails, and hotels that once stood in this area. Level: moderate. Ages: 8+ with adult.

Trails Less Traveled V: Wandering in the Lower Valley with Gerry Schweiger
Sunday, March 25
1-3:30 pm
Meet at Johnson St. bet. Wissahickon Ave. and Lincoln Dr. Johnson is one way from Wissahickon Ave. to Lincoln Dr., so enter from Wissahickon. Park on Johnson as close to Lincoln as possible.
Did you know that there is a trail along the Monoshone Creek by Lincoln Drive, or that there is another trail along the east (Germantown) side of Lincoln? Traveling through RittenhouseTown, we will hike both trails and also visit Blue Bell Hill.
NOTE: Poison Ivy is a hazard. Distance: 3 miles. Duration: 2.5 hours. Ages: 10+ with adult.

Lunch Bunch Walks & Talks with Linda Stern, MD
Wednesday, April 4
The Heart: A Sensory Organ of Perception
Wednesday, April 18
GMOs
Wednesday, May 23
Alzheimer's
10:30 am-1 pm
Meet at The Cedars House.
Explore issues around food, health, and well-being while exercising in our beautiful park and sharing a meal together. We will take a brisk walk to the Covered Bridge and back to get our heart rates up and our endorphins pumped! Over lunch we’ll discuss a variety of health-related issues. Linda is a retired physician who has a passion for looking at health from different points of view and wants to hear from you. Lunch is not included. All participants are responsible for their own lunch and encouraged to pre-order at The Cedars House (call 215-242-3121). Distance: 2 miles.

Apocalyptic Wanderings with Tom Rickards
Saturday, April 7
10 am-12 pm
Meet at Historic RittenhouseTown.
During a hike from Historic RittenhouseTown to the Hermit’s Cave and back, we will explore some of the history of the apocalyptic group led by Johannes Kelpius: the Women of the Wilderness. We will explore apocalyptic literature, notions of religious toleration, and some of the early beauty and mystique of early Philadelphia. Ages: 12+ with adult.

Kid-Friendly Hike with Marv Schwartz
Saturdays, April 14, May 12
10 am-12 pm
Meet at Valley Green Inn.
This hike takes participants along Forbidden Drive and on wooded trails with interesting geologic formations. Visit the Livezey Dam, Gorgas Creek Cave, and the 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. Distance: 2.5 miles. Duration: 2 hours. Level: moderate with some rocky trails.

Trails Less Traveled IV: Icons of the Lower Wissahickon with Gerry Schweiger
Sunday, April 15
1-4 pm
Meet at the parking lot opposite Wissahickon Hall on Gypsy Lane near northbound Lincoln Drive.
Most park visitations are to the points of interest along Forbidden Drive. We will visit less well-known places in the lower valley including RittenhouseTown, the 100 Steps, Hermit’s Cave, and Lover’s Leap. NOTE: There will be several strenuous climbs. Distance: 4.25 miles. Duration: 2.75 hours.

Spring Migration Birding & Photography with Joe Durrance & Michael Kopena
Saturday, April 21
9-11:30 am
Meet at the Kitchen’s Lane Bridge.
This will be a spring migration bird/photography hike up to the Toleration Statue/Mom Rinker's Rock that loops back along Forbidden Drive. The hike will be taken at a slow birding/photography pace. We will sit on the ridge top near Toleration Statue and scan the tree tops for birds. Bringing a camera or binoculars is optional. A limited number of binoculars will be available for loan. Level: easy to moderate.
Lots to Learn on the Way to the Indian with Bruce Wagner
Sunday, April 22
10 am-12 pm
Meet at Warming Shed at Valley Green Inn.

We will walk from Valley Green Inn to the Indian Statue through the woods on rocky trails. Using stories and photographs, we will experience the past and present of our Wissahickon Valley. We will note some of the geology of the park and historic reminders along the way, and visit the Victorian stairway that marks the inclusion of the Wissahickon in the 1876 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia. On our return, the group will decide whether to take Forbidden Drive or a woods path on the other side of the creek. Pace will be set by the group. The trail is even, but there are some hills that need to be taken slowly. Bring water and maybe your camera. Contact bwagner@temple.edu for more info. Level: easy to moderate.

Exploring Toleration with Tom Rickards
Sunday, April 29
10-11 am
Meet at the corner of Park Line Drive and Hortier St.

How did the idea of religious toleration come about in early colonial Pennsylvania? What was William Penn’s vision of a “Holy Experiment” here in Philadelphia? Are there lessons we can learn from our past about diversity of belief and the virtues of toleration today? This will be a short loop hike to explore Toleration Statue with views below (Orange Trail) as well as above (White Trail). Distance: 1.5 miles. Level: moderate.

Trails Less Traveled II: Cresheim Creek South Trails with Gerry Schweiger
Sunday, May 6
1-3:30 pm
Meet at corner of St. Martin’s Lane and Huron St. For GPS and internet: 7500 St. Martin’s Lane, Phila., 19118.

The main trail usage by the Cresheim Creek is on the well maintained north (Chestnut Hill) side, but there are trails covering the hillside along the south (Mt. Airy) side. We will hike two of these lesser-used trails and visit Devil’s Pool and Climber’s Rock. NOTE: These trails cross several steep draws/ravines. Distance: 3.25 miles. Duration: 2.5 hours.

The High Road Behind Valley Green Inn with Bruce Wagner
Sunday, May 20
10 am-12:30 pm
Meet at the Warming Shed at Valley Green Inn.

Up the ridge behind Valley Green Inn is the Yellow Trail, and walking it upstream (somewhat north) takes us across Wise’s Mill Road and along one of the loveliest new trail projects of the past year—the Summit Avenue Trail Reroute. The path is filled with ferns, flowers, and quaint little features—one of the loveliest walks in the park. There is one climb at the beginning of the walk, then the trail is undulating, but fairly smooth. Bring water and camera. Heavy rain cancels. Contact bwagner@temple.edu for more info. Heavy rain cancels. Level: moderate.

Backpacking Basics with Lisa Myers & Shawn Green
Sunday, May 20
12-1:30 pm
Meet at Wissahickon Environmental Center.

Have you been curious about backcountry camping, but not sure where to start? Join experienced backpackers Lisa and Shawn as they discuss essential gear, clothing, preparation, safety precautions, and suggestions for a successful first trip.

Butterfly Walk with Kris Soffa
Wednesday, May 23
10 am-12 pm
Meet at the Wissahickon Environmental Center.

Join FOW TA and PA Master Naturalist Kris Soffa for a mini nature safari where you’ll sharpen your senses and learn fascinating facts about butterflies. We’ll hike to the meadow observation loop in the Andorra Natural Area. Learn how to identify common butterflies while picking up pollinator and caterpillar host plant tips on how to attract butterflies to your home garden. Kris will also offer tips on how to raise butterflies at home. Bring water, camera, and ID book (optional). Rain cancels. Level: easy. Ages: 12+ with adult.

A Walk Through History: Rittenhouse Town with Betsy Wallace
Saturday, June 9
10:30 am-12 pm
Meet in front of the David Rittenhouse Homestead & Bake House in Historic Rittenhouse Town.

From thick Wissahickon woods in the early 1700s to rolling pastureland, farms, and mills in the 1800s, explore the rich history and changes in land use at Historic Rittenhouse Town, the site of North America’s first paper mill. Children welcome with adult. Level: easy to moderate.

Flowers and Ferns with Bruce Wagner
Sunday, June 10
10 am-12 pm
Meet at the Warming Shed at Valley Green Inn.

Our park is filled with greenery, and every spring is a new adventure, but what blooms when depends on the weather. This is a walk scheduled for the woods near Valley Green Inn, and where we walk will depend on what is blooming on June 10. We might find the secret little sections for wildflowers, or maybe the nature of spring will have us looking at the many ferns that inhabit our hills. There’s something lovely out there, and we’ll go find it. There will be lots of stops to look and take photos. Bring water, camera, and kneepads (optional). Contact bwagner@temple.edu for more info. Level: easy to moderate.

Trails Less Traveled VIII: Something Old, Something New with Gerry Schweiger
Sunday, June 17
1-3:30 pm
Meet at the “Cherokee” parking lot of Springside Chestnut Hill Academy adjacent to the SCH athletic fields. For GPS and internet: 8015 Cherokee St., Phila., 19118.

We will visit SCH’s new hiking trails and various other trails that will take us to the Magargee Dam. From there we’ll connect to the abandoned old White Trail and climb to locations overlooking the Hartwell Run gorge and the Wissahickon Creek. NOTE: This hike will include one strenuous climb and difficult footing at the Magargee Dam. Distance: 2.5 miles. Duration: 2.25 hours. Level: moderate.
WINTER IN THE WISSAHICKON

The holiday season got off to a fun, fragrant start at FOW’s annual Winter in the Wissahickon event. Families and friends adorned their own wreaths with decorations from the woods, children made natural treats for wintering birds, and everyone enjoyed the traditional chestnuts roasting on an open fire in the holiday-perfect setting of Valley Green Inn.

Photos by Charles Uniatowski

Garlic Mustard
AN EDIBLE, DELICIOUS INVASIVE

By Trish Fries, Wissahickon Environmental Center

Garlic mustard (Alliaria petiolata) is a common invasive plant seen all over the forest floor in the Wissahickon and throughout the eastern United States. A native of Europe and Asia, it was introduced into this country for use as a medicine and as an edible herb. Love it for its flavor—it can be a tasty springtime treat—or hate it for its invasive nature. We often let our young visitors take a sniff of or a nibble off the plants along the trail. Most children make a face when tasting its garlicky flavor, which, depending on the season, can be mild or strong. At the Tree House, our favorite use of garlic mustard is during the spring when it can be made into garlic mustard pesto.

Garlic mustard is a biennial plant. It is characterized by a scalloped-shape leaf forming basal rosettes its first year. It its second year, the adult form has small white flowers on tall stalks that flower in May and June. Being a member of the mustard family, it has many small seeds which mature in August. Even the seeds taste like garlic. All parts of the plant are edible and nutritious and contain vitamins A and C and many trace minerals.

As with many plants found in the park, there are historical medicinal uses for garlic mustard, ranging from treating bronchitis to gangrene. Perhaps more relevant to our casual use in the woods is making a poultice to relieve the itching of bug bites. Try crushing a leaf and rubbing it on your bite.

In the late 1800s, the plant escaped into the wild and has since become a threat to our native wildflower populations. The overabundance of garlic mustard can be attributed to several survival mechanisms. It has hundreds of seeds per plant and high tannin levels that deter deer from eating it. It is also allelopathic, meaning it releases chemicals that hinder the growth of other plants nearby. While it is against park regulations to remove any plant from the park, it is a safe bet that if you ask the staff of your local environmental center if you could harvest some garlic mustard, it will not be missed.

Join us on Saturday, May 19, at 10:00 a.m. for Love your Park Week and help us remove some garlic mustard. Then stick around to enjoy the flavor in dishes that we prepare, such as pesto and vinegar, and as an addition to salad.

Trish Fries is an Environmental Education Program Specialist at the Wissahickon Environmental Center.

Elaine Haug, hosted by the USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database
**Skunk Cabbage** *(a.k.a. Polecat Weed)*  *Symlocarpus foetidus*

Skunk cabbage is a late winter to early spring ephemeral, one of the first signs of spring from February to March. To look its best, it needs mucky soil and sunlight before the deciduous trees leaf out. It goes dormant by early summer when the tree canopy closes in and the trees suck up most of the water.

Skunk cabbage looks similar to a large hosta with two-foot leaves on long petioles. As the leaves emerge, they unfurl in a spiral and have venation that puckers the surface. Its unusual maroon and yellow flowers consist of a fleshy spathe, shaped like a hood, covering a ball-shaped spadix. The metabolism inside the spathe raises the temperature five degrees or more, melting any remaining snow around it. It also attracts early flies and beetles, which could mistake the foul smell and red flowers for a recently deceased mammal or bird. The early insects may gather pollen and affect pollination.

In the Wissahickon you can find skunk cabbage on the Orange Trail between the Mt. Airy Bridge and the Cresheim Creek.

**Jack-in-the-Pulpit** *(a.k.a. Indian Turnip)*  *Arisema triphyllum*

Jack-in-the-pulpit is related to skunk cabbage with a curving, ridged hood (spathe or pulpit) around an erect club (spadix or Jack). Found in the moist woods, the flowers are designed to attract small flies, which crawl down the spadix and over the flowers, and thus pollinate them.

The long-stemmed leaves are in three parts, often streaked, above a warty sheath (tube). The flowers are protected by the spathe, which begins to dry and split as clusters of seeds swell inside. The scarlet fruits, looking like corn on the cob, appear in late summer.

Jack-in-the-pulpit can be found on the Yellow Trail, going from Valley Green Inn toward Janette Street, and along Forbidden Drive. Native Americans gathered and cooked the fleshy taproots, resulting in the common name “Indian turnip.”

**Mayapple**  *Podophyllum peltatum*

The design of the leaves of mayapples resembles an umbrella, which is efficient for collecting the weak spring light on the forest floor. The name refers to the blooming flowers, which look like apple blossoms. The single, nodding flower is found in the crotch between a pair of large, deeply lobed leaves. The self-sterile flowers will occasionally get cross pollinated by bees and a yellow plum will result.

While the leaves, roots, and seeds are poisonous, the ripe golden fruit is edible and a favorite of box turtles. The plants have a history of medicinal use as an enema or for deworming. Recent research on derivatives has shown promise to selectively kill tumor cells.

Mayapples can be found in the Wissahickon on the Yellow Trail during—when else?—May!

**Trout Lily**  *Erythronium americanum*

Trout lilies are another spring ephemeral that takes advantage of the spring sun and quickly goes dormant in the summer. These little spring bulbs produce a pair of brownish mottled leaves that cover the base of a stalk bearing a single nodding yellow flower.

The green, grey, and brown patterned leaves resemble the markings of a brook trout, and the season of bloom coincides with trout fishing season. Trout lily flowers remain closed at night and on overcast days, but when the sun appears the tepals (petals) recurve fully. The reflexed tepals of the flower look windswept, which William Cullina in *The New England Wild Flower Society Guide to Growing and Propagating* describes “as if being held out the window of a moving automobile.”

Blister beetles and native bees collect the nectar and transport pollen on their lower surfaces. Resist the urge to dig them up, and instead leave them in their native, moist woodland where they grow best. There is a large group of trout lilies on the Orange Trail between Valley Green Road and the Cresheim Creek, just beyond the Mt. Airy Bridge on Forbidden Drive.

Wendy Willard is an FOW Crew Leader and Trail Ambassador, Horticulturist, and Landscape Designer of Hort. Landscape. You can reach her at mhbMBH@aol.com. FOW Trail Ambassador Don Simon contributed to this article.
When it comes to the ongoing debate about leashing dogs in the Wissahickon, the real issue isn’t about dogs at all. It is about how we can all use the park together in a way that protects the safety of all visitors (dogs included), the fragile forest habitat, and the quality of our drinking water.

Growing concerns about safety—for both our human and canine park users—prompted FOW to hold a meeting last fall to air all sides of this important issue, together as a concerned community. Nearly 100 park users, both dog- and non-dog owners, and representatives from Philadelphia Parks & Recreation (PPR), neighborhoods, and police districts, gathered on a stormy night to begin a productive dialogue and consider feasible short- and long-term solutions that balance interests and resources while promoting safe, responsible, and enjoyable park use for all.

Based on the many recommendations voiced at the meeting, four main categories emerged for further dialogue and participation by selected organizational leadership and interested individuals:

- Policy and enforcement review and enhancement (by PPR)
- Designated space and times (for dogs to be off-leash)
- Special licensing/certification (e.g. dogs must undergo/pass special training)
- Increased FOW Trail Ambassador and PPR Park Ranger presence and signage, including special instructions on activating policy and animal control in the event of an incident

Currently, FOW continues to support the enforcement of all dog-related park rules while working closely with PPR to make meaningful changes where needed. FOW will be adding signage throughout the park encouraging courtesy and respect for other visitors when walking dogs, and is exploring the possibility of Trail Ambassadors partnering with a dog advocacy or training group.

The hope is that the dog community will organize as its own constituency and work with relevant organizations toward advancing its goals, and FOW will guide and advise them in their efforts.

In the meantime, if you encounter any dog-related emergencies in the park, call 911 or text WISS to 267-966-2207, so FOW has a record of the incident and can contact animal control if a dog is found wandering off-leash. Also, consider using FOW’s Facebook page to report a lost dog—it has helped reunite many dogs and owners.

FOW will continue to keep the public posted about significant changes and opportunities to get involved in this important, complex issue. If the fall meeting was any indication, while opinions may vary on the subject, there is no question that dogs and their owners love the park and they are part of our special community.

Gene had been walking the trails for 35 years, but always the same ones, never venturing to the Roxborough side for example. And health problems over the last few years didn’t make it easier to go exploring. But the All Trails Challenge changed that. Gene decided to take on the Challenge to improve her health and motivate her to explore previously unfamiliar parts of the park. She’s loved exploring new trails and plans to return to all of them even after the fall to see how they look in other seasons.

**What is your favorite park trail?**

Hard to say—like asking my favorite season to walk in the park. It changes with every season. I like the upper trails for their wildness. I like the small stretch of trail between Kitchen’s Lane and Monastery Stables for its incredible wildflowers—red trilliums and evanescent trout lilies.

**What was your motivation to join the All Trails Challenge?**

I love the park, and have been walking some trails for 35 years. But always the same trails; I never ventured to the Roxborough side for example. I have had significant health problems in the last few years and I joined the challenge to affirm health and to have motivation to explore “unknown” parts of the park.

**Will you continue hiking now that the ATC is over?**

I have loved exploring new trails and want to go back to all of them as the leaves fall to see how they look in the next seasons.

NOTE: FOW published the incorrect interview in our ATC Challenger Close-Up in the winter issue. This is the correct interview of Gene Bishop, the Top Fundraiser for the All Trails Challenge in 2017.
HIKES IN THE WISSAHICKON

Trail Ambassador Walks & Talks
Registration is not required but recommended in the event of cancellation. Unless otherwise noted, walks are on rocky, rugged trails that may be wet, slippery, or steep. Wear long pants for protection against poison ivy and possible ticks, as well as sturdy, protective shoes or boots. Bring water. Walks suitable for children are noted in their descriptions. Walks are cancelled in the event of heavy rain/bow/or and/or dangerous driving conditions. Visit fow.org to register.

MORE INFORMATION ON P. 14 AND AT FOW.ORG

Appalachian Mountain Club
Delaware Valley Chapter
amcdn.org

Mondays. Wissahickon Wanderings. Join us for a hike of 5 miles on various trails throughout the beautiful Wissahickon Gorge. The distance of the hike will be dependent on conditions and speed of the group. Meet at 6:30 pm by the Valley Green Inn. Bring water, snacks, and a flashlight. Bad weather may cancel. If in doubt, check the status of the hike before 5:30 pm.

Philaventures
waygay40.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 (927-854)59).comcast.net.

Hiking with Maura the Explorer
Last Friday of every month 10 am
Join FOW Executive Director Maura McCarthy for a hike on the last Friday of each month. She will tour a different section of the Wissahickon during each hike and talk about her park experiences, as well as point out any recent improvements by FOW. Bring your hiking shoes and be ready to share your favorite Wissahickon stories with her! Registration is recommended. For more information and to register, visit fow.org.

GIVING

There are several ways to make meaningful gifts to advance FOW’s mission.

UNITED WAY DONATIONS

Friends of the Wissahickon can receive donations through the United Way. If your employer offers United Way giving and you would like to designate Friends of the Wissahickon as your beneficiary, please use our option code #9882.

AMAZON SMILE

If you shop on Amazon.com, use AmazonSmile (smile.amazon.com) and select Friends of the Wissahickon as the nonprofit organization you would like to support. The AmazonSmile Foundation will donate 0.5 percent of the purchase price from your eligible AmazonSmile purchases to FOW.

STOCK

Consider giving a gift of stock. Our DTC # is 0062 and our Vanguard Brokerage Acct # is 23501307.

SPONSOR A WORKDAY

Your business can support the conservation of Wissahickon Valley Park. By sponsoring a Corporate Workday, you will engage your employees in a unique team-building project with tangible benefits to the park and the community.
Looking for Letters from the Valley: Harvesting Native Blueberries • Saturday, June 25 | 10 AM
Meet local blueberry expert Ed Ricketts in the Andorra Meadow as we harvest the season’s first blueberries. All ages. Registration required. FREE.

FLOWERS IN MAY • Sunday, May 19
Relax in the shade with a cup of tea and learn about local flowers with our local horticulturist, Lois Bollenbacher. All ages. Registration required. $5.00.

FLOWERS FOR HONEY | MAY 17
Enjoy a walk through the wildflower meadow and learn about the plants that provide nectar and pollen for our native pollinators. Tots will go climb over fallen trees, scramble over rocks, and make “bee bursts” (seeds in clay) to take home.

SPRING SONG • APRIL 29 | 7:30 PM
Join us at the Tree House as we hope to catch an early wave of spring migration in one of Wissahickon Valley Park’s birding prime locations—Harper’s and Andorra Meadows. All ages. Registration Suggested. FREE.

SPRING MIGRATION I • SUNDAY, APRIL 29 | 7:30 AM
Meet local birder Martin Saber at the Harper House as we hope to catch spring migration in one of Wissahickon Valley Park’s birding prime locations. All ages. Registration Required. FREE.

BAT WALK • FRIDAY, JUNE 15 | 7:30 PM
We will walk through Andorra Meadow or down to the creek with our bat detector and learn about the night-singing insects. All ages. Registration required. FREE.

LOVE YOUR PARK: EATING INVASIVES • SATURDAY, MAY 19 | 10 AM
Join us as we identify and remove as much garlic mustard and other invasive plants as possible before noon. Then stick around to learn more about the plants that we want. Registration required. All ages. FREE.

LOOK OUT FOR LANTERN FLY • FRIDAY, APRIL 27 | 2 PM
The invasive Spotted Lantern Fly has arrived in our area. It’s a new invasive insect that is rapidly spreading into our region, threatening our fruit crops and our native forest. Join us to learn to identify all stages of its life, the destruction it’s capable of, and then like us with search for and remove egg masses.

SPRING TONIC TEA PARTY • SATURDAY, APRIL 14 | 1 PM
Join us for an afternoon tasting spicebush tea, nettle tea, dandelion tea, and other teas made with maple sap and local plants! Then we’ll head out for a walk to learn more about the plants that we want. Registration required. All ages. FREE.

HISTORIC RITTENHOUSETOWN
Historic RittenhouseTown offers classes, workshops, and events for individuals and families to learn about the craft of hand papermaking and other aspects of Colonial life at the original Rittenhouse Family Homestead. Located on Lincoln Drive at Rittenhouse Street, info at 215-438-5271, programs@rittenhouse.org, or www.rittenhouse.org.

WISSAHICKON RUNNERS CLUBS
EVERY THURSDAY
Wissahickon Wanderers Trail Run 4-5 miles. Starts 6:30 pm sharp at Valley Green Inn. No Fees. All runners, speeds, and skill levels welcome! Fun food and Cash Bar afterwards courtesy of the Valley Green Inn. For updates and more info visit wanderersrunningclub.com.

EVERY SATURDAY
Sewninton Running Club. Starts at Northwestern Ave. & Andorra Rd. (north end of Forbidden Drive). From the 2nd Saturday in May through the 2nd Saturday in October, start at 7:30 am from 3rd Saturday in October, through 1st Saturday in May start at 6 am. Distances are at the discretion of runners. All levels welcome. Emphasis is on fun! More info at sewnintonrunningclub.com.

friends of the wissahickon valley parks
WVWA 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 www.wvwa.org.

SPRING PARK CLEAN-UPS WITH FOW! SEE P. 7
Join us for structure repair and construction from 9 am to 1 pm. For more information or to volunteer, contact Field Operations Manager John Holback at holback@fow.org or 215-381-2947.

KIDS EXPLORE: FOREST • SATURDAY, APRIL 14 | 10 AM
Ready for your kids just to be in the woods? Led by our staff, equipped with a few Band-aids, the kids will go climbing over fallen trees, scrambling over rocks, playing in the creek, and much more. Ages 6-12. Drop-in optional. FREE.

KIDS EXPLORE: CREEK • SATURDAY, JUNE 16 | 10 AM
Ready for your kids just to be in the woods? Led by our staff, equipped with a few Band-aids, the kids will go climbing over fallen trees, scrambling over rocks, playing in the creek, and much more. Ages 6-12. Registration required. Drop-in optional. FREE.

HISTORIC RITTENHOUSETOWN
Historic RittenhouseTown offers classes, workshops, and events for individuals and families to learn about the craft of hand papermaking and other aspects of Colonial life at the original Rittenhouse Family Homestead. Located on Lincoln Drive at Rittenhouse Street, info at 215-438-5271, programs@rittenhouse.org, or www.rittenhouse.org.

LATER IN THE YEAR
Join us for a Family Night Out to make home made soap! Contact Eileen at oriole@fow.org for more information.

THURSDAY TOTS
Bring your little one for an hour of discovery (1-2 pm) at the Tree House. Each month we’ll explore a new topic that celebrates the seasons. Ages 3-5. Parents stay with their child. Registration required. $5.00 per child per lesson.

DANDELION TEA PARTY IN DOGWOOD HOLLOW • APRIL 19
Tots will pick dandelions and other edible plants/flowers on their way to the Dogwood Yulees for a tea party. (Tea premise, but will teach them to make it in the meadow.)

FLOWERS FOR HONEY • MAY 17
Tots will learn about the honeybee, take a walk to the bee hives, taste honey, and make “bee bursts” (seeds in clay) to take home.

CREEK CREATURES • JUNE 14
Tots will get their feet wet and explore life in the Wissahickon Creek.

DANDELION TEA PARTY IN DOGWOOD HOLLOW • APRIL 19
Tots will pick dandelions and other edible plants/flowers on their way to the Dogwood Yulees for a tea party. (Tea premise, but will teach them to make it in the meadow.)

FLOWERS FOR HONEY • MAY 17
Tots will learn about the honeybee, take a walk to the bee hives, taste honey, and make “bee bursts” (seeds in clay) to take home.

CREEK CREATURES • JUNE 14
Tots will get their feet wet and explore life in the Wissahickon Creek.

HISTORIC RITTENHOUSETOWN
Historic RittenhouseTown offers classes, workshops, and events for individuals and families to learn about the craft of hand papermaking and other aspects of Colonial life at the original Rittenhouse Family Homestead. Located on Lincoln Drive at Rittenhouse Street, info at 215-438-5271, programs@rittenhouse.org, or www.rittenhouse.org.
CALENDAR OF EVENTS
IN THE WISSAHICKON

WISSAHICKON VALLEY WATERSHED ASSOCIATION
WWA 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 Monts Road in Ambler. More info. at www.org.

RUNNING CLUBS

EVERY THURSDAY
Wissahickon Wanderers Trail Run. 4-5 miles. Starts 6:30 pm sharp at Valley Green Inn. No fees. All runners, sprinkles, wheelchairs welcome! Fun food and Cash Bar afterwards courtesy of the Valley Green Inn. For updates and more info visit wissahickonrunningclub.org.

EVERY SATURDAY
Shawmont Running Club. Starts at Northeastern Ave. & Andorra Rd. (north end of Forttotic Road). From the 3rd Saturday in May through the 3rd Saturday in October, start at 7:30 am From 3rd Saturday in October, through 1st Saturday in May start at 8 am. Distances are at the discretion of runners. All levels welcome. Emphasis is on fun. More info. at shawmontrunningclub.com.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

SPRING PARK CLEAN-UPS WITH FOW! SEE P. 7

TUESDAYS
Join us for structure repair and construction from 9 am to 1 pm. For more information or to volunteer, contact Field Operations Manager John Holbach at holbach@fow.org or 215-381-2947.

THURSDAYS
Join FOW on Thursdays for a morning of trail maintenance in the park! Work will consist of regular trail maintenance projects including repairing drainage and grade reversals, restoring stone work, narrowing widened trails, and emergency trail repairs. Meet at Pachella Field (6711 Henry Ave.) at 9:30 am and plan on being on the trails starting at 9:45 and back at Pachella Field by 1 pm. For more information or to volunteer, contact Volunteer Coordinator Shawn Green at green@fow.org.

SATURDAYS
There’s no better way to be friends than to help us in the park with trail maintenance, invasive weed removal, planting, and general clean-ups from 9 am to 1 pm. Visit fow.org/volunteering for more information.

THIRD SATURDAY OF THE MONTH
Join Friends of Cresheim Trail to improve the trails in the Cresheim Creek area. Meet at the entrance at Lincoln Drive and Allen’s Lane at 10 am and plan on being on the trails starting at 10:15 and back at Allen’s Lane by 1 pm. For more information or to volunteer, contact Friends of Cresheim Trail at info@fow.org or 215-719-9159.

WISSAHICKON ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER
Programs are FREE unless otherwise noted. Registration strongly requested or required for most programs; registering early is recommended. at TreeHouse/Wissahickon.org, Programs begin at the Tree House (300 W. Northwestern Ave., Philadelphia, PA 19118) unless otherwise noted. An * indicates a program at which children are welcome, but the content is not tailored to them.

KIDS EXPLORE: FOREST • SATURDAY, APRIL 14 | 10 AM
Ready for your kids just to be kids in the woods? Led by our staff, equipped with a few basic tools, the kids will go on a nature walk, scrambling over rocks, running through a field, and much more! Registration required. Ages 6-12. Drop-off optional. FREE

SPRING TONE TEA PARTY • SATURDAY, APRIL 14 | 11 PM
Join us for an afternoon tasting ofspokeshave tea, nettle tea, dandelion tea, and other teas made with maple sap and local planted. Then we’ll head out for a walk to learn more about the plants we use. Registration required. All ages. FREE

LOOK OUT FOR LANTERNFLY • FRIDAY, APRIL 27 | 2 PM
The invasive Spotted Lanternfly has arrived in our area. It’s a new invasive insect that is rapidly spreading into our region, threatening our fruit crops and our native forest. Join us to learn to identify all stages of its life, the destruction it’s capable of, and then hike with us to search for and remove egg masses.

SPRING MIGRATION I • SUNDAY, APRIL 29 | 7:30 AM
Meet local birder Martin Seiber at the Tree House as we hope to catch an early wave of spring migration in two of Wissahickon Valley Park’s premier prime locations—Harper’s and Anderson Meadows. All Ages. Registration Suggested. FREE.

MOONLIGHT TOAD WALK • MONDAY, APRIL 30 | 7:30 PM
This hike coincides with the full moon and breeding season of some frogs including American toads. We will listen to the strange and often beautiful songs of these night singing amphibians. All ages. Registration required. FREE

SPRING MIGRATION II • SUNDAY, MAY 13 | 7:30 AM
Meet local birder Martin Seiber at the Tree House as we hope to catch an early wave of spring migration in one of Wissahickon Valley Park’s premier prime locations, at what should be the peak of songbird migration. All ages. Registration Suggested. FREE

LOVE YOUR PARK: EATING INVASIVES • SATURDAY, MAY 19 | 10 AM
Join us for Love Your Park Week and lend a hand as we identify and remove as much garlic mustard and other invasive plants as possible before noon. Then stick around to taste a few tasty dishes made with the same invasions. All ages. Registration required. FREE

BAY WALK • FRIDAY, JUNE 15 | 7:30 PM
We will walk through Andrea Meadow or down to the creek with our bat detector and try to identify as many bat species as we can. We’ll also listen for owls and night-singing insects. All ages. Registration required. FREE

HISTORIC RITTERHOUSE TOWN
Historic RittenhouseTown offers classes, workshops, and events for individuals and families to learn about the craft of hand papermaking and other aspects of Colonial Life at the original Rittenhouse Family Homestead, Located on Lincoln Drive at Rittenhouse Street. Info. at 215-438-5711, programs@rittenhouse.org, or www.rittenhouse.org.

FOR A LISTING OF MORE EVENTS, VISIT FOW.ORG EVENTS.

JOIN US ON FACEBOOK, TWITTER, AND INSTAGRAM

FRIENDS OF THE WISSAHICKON

SPRING PARK CLEAN-UPS WITH FOW! SEE P. 7

KIDS EXPLORE: CREEK • SATURDAY, JUNE 16 | 10 AM
Ready for your kids just to be kids in the woods? Led by our staff, equipped with a few basic tools, the kids will go on a nature walk, scrambling over rocks, running through a field, and much more! Registration required. Ages 6-12. Drop-off optional. FREE

MUD DAY • FRIDAY, JUNE 29 | 3:30 - 5 PM
We will be celebrating the squishy, slimy, messy world of mud on International Mud Day. Make mud pies, test the mud between your toes, and prepare to get dirty! Come anytime between 3-5:30 pm with a towel, and a change of clothes. Rain or Shine! All ages with adult. Registration required. FREE

THURSDAY TOTS
Bring your little one for an hour of discovery (1-2 pm) at the Tree House. Each month we will explain a new trick that celebrates the season. Ages 3-5. Parents stay with their child. Registration required. $5.00 per child per lesson.

DANDELION TEA PARTY IN DOGWOOD HOLLIES APRIL 19
Tots will pick dandelions and other edible plants/flowers on their way to the Dogwood Hollies for a tea party. (Photo prints, but will teach them to make it in the meadow).

FLOWERS FOR HONEY • MAY 17
Tots will learn about the honeybee, take a walk to the bee hives, taste honey, and make “bee bursts” (seeds in clay) to take home.

CREEK CREATURES | JUNE 14
Tots will get their feet wet and explore life in the Wissahickon Creek.

ANNUAL MEETING

JUNE 5
P. 13

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 at fow.org/events, which contains updates on our events, including cancellations.