



BULLETIN

SUMMER 2026



WHERE FIREFLIES GLOW
AND HABITATS GROW

OUR STAFF

Chris Bason, *Executive Director*
Brian Shema, *Operations Director*
Chris Kubiak, *Education Director*
Betsy Monroe, *Finance & Administration Director*
Karen Stein, *Butler Centers Director*

BEECHWOOD FARMS NATURE RESERVE

Scott Detwiler, *Environmental Educator*
Sofia Di Gennaro, *Retail Sales Associate*
Samantha Ditch, *Retail Manager*
Gabrielle Hughes, *Environmental Educator*
Dan Mendenhall, *Facility Steward*
Meghan Phillips, *Development & Marketing Associate*
Nick Stahlman, *Community Conservation Coordinator*
Roxanne Swan, *Plant Center Coordinator*

SUCCOP NATURE PARK, BUFFALO CREEK NATURE PARK & TODD NATURE RESERVE

Larissa Cassano-Hamilton, *Butler Centers Coordinator*
Steve Antoszyk, *Facility Steward*
Ryan Stauffer, *Environmental Educator*

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Jim Pashek, *President*
Gwil Price, *Vice President*
John Hilderbrand, *Treasurer*
Natalie Boydston, *Secretary*
Byron Black
Jason Davidek
Joy Dress
Dr. Rohan Ganguli
Dr. Burhan Charaibeh
Michelle Latta
Nancy Magee
Michele Meloy Burchfield
Dr. Becca Righam
Doug Roth
Walter "Alex" Scott
Dr. Dan Wetzel

DIRECTOR EMERITI

Tingle Barnes
Dotty Beckwith
Dan Fales
Nancy Fales
Betsey Owens
Paul g Wiegman

BULLETIN

SUMMER 2026

IN THIS ISSUE

OUR RESERVES.....	2
A MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR.....	3
LIGHTING BUGS: MORE THAN JUST A SUMMER GLOW.....	4
PROGRAM SCHEDULE.....	6
MEMORIALS AND HONORS.....	9
ASK THE NATURALIST.....	10
ASWP NEWS.....	11
VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT.....	13

OUR RESERVES

BEECHWOOD FARMS NATURE RESERVE

614 Dorseyville Road in Fox Chapel, Pittsburgh, PA 15238
Dogs not permitted on trails

BUFFALO CREEK NATURE PARK

154 Monroe Road, Sarver, PA 16055
Dogs on leash are welcome

SUCCOP NATURE PARK

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

TODD NATURE RESERVE

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

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

Cover Image: Common Eastern Firefly (*Photinus pyralis*)
Photo Credit: Lauren Nagoda



The Bulletin is published three times a year by Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania, 614 Dorseyville Road, Pittsburgh PA 15238-1618. Address correspondence to Meghan Phillips, Editor. The editor reserves the right to edit or reject all copy. The Bulletin is received as a membership benefit. Nonmember subscriptions are \$10.00 per year. For membership, subscriptions, or address change, contact ASWP. Printed on recycled paper.



A MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

At Audubon we know that where bird life thrives, so do people. For some time, we have educated about declines in bird populations, not only as an environmental indicator but as a warning for the well-being of our communities. New research now shows that for many North American birds, those declines are accelerating.

This February, *Science*, published a comprehensive analysis of 35 years of standardized data for 261 bird species. Nearly half of the species had populations in decline, and half of those showed accelerating declines. This is a serious situation for North American birds. Somewhat on the bright side, birds in Western Pennsylvania appeared to experience less acceleration in their declines than in other areas.

The study also found an association between bird declines and temperature. Warm and warming areas were associated with bird declines. And areas of high intensity agriculture were associated with accelerating declines. These results don't prove cause and effect, but they suggest that climate change and highly intensive agriculture may be interacting in ways that impact birds.

Nationwide studies like this combined with community science, like the Christmas Bird Count, are essential to understanding bird populations. We know the situation is serious and getting worse for many species. We also know that the conservation responses remain clear: we must protect healthy natural habitats and reduce the contribution of greenhouse gases that heat our environment.

This spring we can take action that helps us personally while protecting birdlife. Upgrade insulation and plan to replace your home's heating and cooling systems with highly efficient equipment. Consider adding solar energy and battery storage to your home. Voice your support for public policies that conserve natural habitats and incentivize renewable energy. Become part of a homegrown network of bird habitats by adding native species that support birds to your yard or park. Each step we take individually lends support to the collective action needed to reverse bird life declines.

CHRIS BASON, *Executive Director*

AUDUBON
**NATURE
CAMPS**

Experience a raptor encounter program in each week of every camp!

REGISTRATION IS OPEN! JUNE-AUGUST

Summer Nature Camps offer hands-on outdoor experiences for kids to explore, learn, and connect with nature all season long. There are options at Beechwood Farms Nature Reserve, Succop Nature Park, and Buffalo Creek Nature Park. Registration is limited. Visit aswp.org to learn more and register.

LIGHTNING BUGS: MORE THAN JUST A SUMMER GLOW

"Lightning bugs are out!" Growing up near Pittsburgh, this cry marked the transition from day to night better than any clock. Jars would appear and the chase would be on. We never gave much thought to *why* they flashed—clearly it was just for our amusement. And yet these charismatic beetles have fascinating stories to tell.

Pennsylvania is home to at least 30 firefly species, but despite their popularity, relatively little research has been done on them. That's beginning to change: Conemaugh Valley Conservancy's John Whetzel will conduct a DCNR-funded inventory to study species and their distribution across the state.

A FLASH FOR EVERY SPECIES

While adults sport different identifying marks on their bodies, we most often see fireflies as blinking lights in the dark. But those flashes are unique to each species. Flying males use their flash pattern to advertise to perched females, who flash back to signal interest—a mating morse code that is species-specific.

As dusk settles in your backyard, the firefly most kids are chasing is the Big Dipper Firefly (*Photinus pyralis*). Males swoop upward while emitting a long yellow glow, tracing a "J" in the air. Highly adaptable, it thrives in a diverse range of habitats. The Little Gray Firefly (*P. marginellus*), another denizen of tree-lined yards and parks, is tiny with pale gray wings. Males flash quickly and low to the ground before gradually rising toward the treetops as night progresses. Its small size leads some to mistake it for a juvenile—but firefly larvae are beetle grubs that look nothing like adults.

Firefly larvae crawling above the soil are worth seeking out: all firefly larvae glow, even those whose adults cannot light up.

That glow advertises a chemical cocktail that makes them unpalatable to predators—which leads to one of the more remarkable firefly stories.

PENNSYLVANIA'S CUNNING STATE INSECT

In 1974, a group of Upper Darby schoolchildren successfully lobbied to make the firefly Pennsylvania's state insect. The honoree, *Photuris pensylvanica*, is recognizable by its large, humpbacked body and a pale diagonal stripe along each wing cover. While male *Photuris* faithfully flash their mating signals in flight, perched females are engaged in trickery below. They mimic the flash of a female *Photinus*, and when an unsuspecting male flies down for a romantic encounter, she eats him—stealing his defensive chemicals for herself and her eggs. Resourceful, to say the least.

Pennsylvania also hosts a rarer spectacle: synchronous fireflies (*Photinus carolinus*) along Tionesta Creek in Forest County, whose coordinated flashing draws such crowds that viewing now requires a lottery entry.

PROTECTING THE FLASH

Fireflies thrive in humid, plant-diverse habitats, but they are vulnerable to habitat loss, climate change, pesticide use, and light pollution. Ongoing efforts—including the state inventory and the Xerces Society's Firefly Atlas—help track populations and inform conservation. Even small changes make a difference. See this issue's Ask the Naturalist section for tips on making your yard a haven for nature's little nocturnal beacons.



Photinus marginellus
Jacy Lucier



***Photinus pyralis* in flight**
Terry Priest



Photuris pensylvanica
Jacy Lucier

PROGRAM SCHEDULE



*Black-capped
Chickadee*

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

Events take place at **Beechwood Farms Nature Reserve (BFNR)**, **Succop Nature Park (SNP)**, **Todd Nature Reserve (TNR)**, **Buffalo Creek Nature Park (BCNP)**, or online via **Zoom**. Register online at aswp.org or call (412) 963-6100.

SPECIAL EVENTS

Picnics in the Park at Succop Nature Park

*Thursdays: June 11, July 9, August 13, & September 10 / SNP
6:30–8:30pm*

Bring a picnic dinner and a blanket and enjoy free, live music at Succop Nature Park. There's also limited seating under the pavilion.

Volunteer Naturalist Training at Succop Nature Park

Thursdays in September (3, 10, 17, & 24), 9am–2pm / SNP

Have a passion for birds and nature while wanting to teach the next generation about the importance of protecting the environment? ASWP's Volunteer Naturalist Program trains new volunteers to lead groups of school children on thematic nature walks at Succop and Buffalo Creek Nature Parks'. We offer guided training with Audubon experts where we give new naturalists all the natural history background and educational activity plans they need to lead our visiting school children on our trails. Training covers local birds, pioneers in nature, engineering a bald eagle nest, and more! Each session starts off with an hour-long bird and nature walk and gets volunteers acquainted with the habitat at our park. Free.

NATIVE PLANTS

Supporting Pollinators with Native Plants

Saturday, June 20, 10am–12pm / BFNR

Get set for pollinator week! Discover fascinating survival strategies plants use to lure insects that are critical for pollination. And learn how to support these species with a native plant garden. Each participant will take home seeds and seedlings to grow their own native pollinator garden. \$10 per member, \$20 per nonmember.

Monarchs & Milkweed*

Saturday, July 25, 10am–12pm / BFNR & BCNP

Saturday, August 8, 10am–12pm / SNP

This program discusses the critical importance of milkweed in Monarch habitat and food source. Participants will learn about the Monarchs' conservation challenges and how they can help by planting milkweed in their own backyards. We will also discuss the Monarch Larva Monitoring Project, which is a longterm study of the distribution, breeding and mortality rates of monarch butterflies. Participants learn how this community science project engages people in observing and studying the milkweed habitat and identify all life stages of the Monarch butterfly in the field. Free.

Native and Invasive Plants: An Introduction*

Saturday, August 1, 10–11:30am / BFNR

This program introduces what is a "native plant" and why is it important for our local ecosystems. We will also learn why invasive plant species cause challenges to our fields and forests in Western Pennsylvania, and what you can do about them. Explore the reserve for examples of native and invasive plant species, then go behind the scenes and tour our nursery operations. Free.

🌐 Native Backyard Fruit*

Thursday, August 20, 6–7:30pm / Online

Native Plants provide many delicious types of fruit that will grow in our home gardens year after year. Learn about a variety of productive, easy to grow native edible plants as well as garden techniques that promote environmental stewardship including water-wise gardening, composting and natural pest control. Free.

Bird Friendly Plants for Fall*

Saturday, September 26, 11am–12:30pm / Online

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

Fall Tree and Shrub Sale*

October 1–31 / BFNR

Fall is a great time for planting! During the month of October, an extra 15% discount will be offered on all native trees and shrubs—that's a total of 25% off for members and 15% off for non-members.

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

BIRDING & NATURE HIKES

Birds & More Naturalist Led Morning Walks

BCNP: Every Tuesday at 9am; Free

BFNR: Every Wednesday and Sunday at 9am; Free

SNP: Every Thursday 9am; Free

TNR: Every Friday at 9am; Free

BIRDS

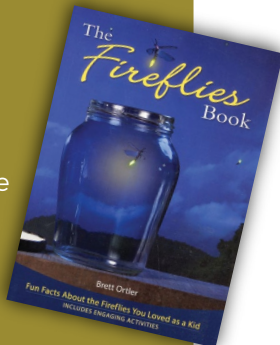
Birding Trail Guide Series: Piney Tract State Game Lands 330

Saturday, June 27, 8am–12pm

Join us for a summer morning exploring one of western Pennsylvania's best sites for grassland birds. Piney Tract's rolling fields and reclaimed strip mines are alive in June with the songs of meadowlarks, bobolinks, grasshopper sparrows, and other open-country specialists. We'll look and listen for these charismatic breeders while discussing how grassland habitat restoration supports their nesting success and long-term survival. This walk complements our online program on grassland birds and their habitats on June 17. Email Nick Stahlman at nstahlman@aswp.org for more information. \$10 per member, \$20 per nonmember.

GRAB YOUR COPY OF THE FIREFLIES BOOK!

This compact but comprehensive book delves into the science and lore of fireflies. It includes engaging activities for all ages, as well as explanations of the chemistry of firefly light, firefly predation, and life cycle.



Beginning Birding Hike

Saturday, July 11, 9–11am / BFNR

Saturday, July 18, 9–11am / SNP

Saturday, July 25, 9–11am / BCNP

Ever wanted to go bird watching, but you didn't know where to begin? This program focuses on beginning birders to get their feet wet in one of the fastest growing outdoor activities—birding! This program will show you how to use binoculars and field guides and discover the secrets of becoming a better birder! \$10 per member, \$15 per nonmember.

Audubon Raptor Encounters

Kids—Tuesday, August 11, 10–11am / BFNR

Families—Wednesday, August 12, 5–6pm / BFNR

Adults—Thursday, August 13, 6–7:30pm / BFNR

Kids—Wednesday, August 19, 10–11am / SNP

Families—Thursday, August 20, 5–6pm / SNP

Adults—Thursday, August 20, 6–7:30pm / SNP

Kids—Thursday, August 27, 10–11am / BCNP

Families—Wednesday, August 26, 5–6pm / BCNP

Adults—Wednesday, August 26, 6–7:30pm / BCNP

Discover the incredible world of raptors with our Bird of Prey series! Join us for an up-close look at some of our live wildlife ambassadors as we explore the fascinating lives and adaptations of hawks, owls, falcons, and other birds of prey. Learn how diurnal and nocturnal species are uniquely equipped for hunting, flight, and survival. We are excited to offer this program in several formats designed for kids, families, and adults. Each event offers a chance to see these magnificent birds up close and gain a new appreciation for their role in western Pennsylvania ecosystems. \$10 per member, \$15 per non-member.

Fall Migratory Bird Hikes

Sunday, August 30, 9–11am / BCNP

Saturday, September 5, 9–11am / BFNR

Sunday, September 6, 9–11am / SNP

Summer is ending and the birds know it! During this naturalist-led hike, we'll be looking for birds that are ready to make their way south for the winter. \$10 per member, \$15 per non-member.

Fall Migration Celebration

Saturday, September 19, 10am–2pm / BFNR

Celebrate World Migratory Bird Day with a festival highlighting the incredible movement of birds through western Pennsylvania each fall. Beechwood Farms Nature Reserve sits along an important fall migratory pathway, offering a unique opportunity to experience a rich diversity of species as they journey south. This family-friendly event will feature guided bird walks, guest speakers, and partner organizations sharing ways to support birds at home and in your community. Meet ASWP's Raptor Ambassadors up close and learn about the challenges birds face during migration and how healthy habitats in our region play a critical role in their survival. Whether you are new to birding or a longtime enthusiast, this celebration offers a chance to witness migration in action and connect with others who care about birds and the places they depend on. \$10 per member, \$15 per non-member.

Harrison Hills Bird Walk

Sunday, September 27, 9am –12pm

Join us at Harrison Hills Park, one of the region's most popular places to bird. We will meet in the parking lot at the Environmental Learning Center and bird some of the surrounding trails. Email Chris Kubiak at ckubiak@aswp.org for more details. \$10 per member, \$20 per non-member. Registration required.

COMMUNITY SCIENCE

Summer Nights and Fireflies

Saturday, June 20, 8–10pm / SNP

Friday, June 26, 8–10pm / BCNP

Saturday, June 27, 8–10pm / BFNR

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

ONLINE NATURAL HISTORY PROGRAMS

Grassland Birds of Western Pennsylvania

Wednesday, June 17, 7–8:30pm / Online

Step into the world of Pennsylvania's grassland birds before you hit the field! In this online session, we'll explore species like Bobolinks, Eastern Meadowlarks, Grasshopper Sparrows, and Yellow-breasted Chats, highlighting their identifying features, songs, and breeding behaviors. Learn why grassland habitats are so important, how these birds rely on open fields, and what conservation efforts help support their populations. This program will prepare you for our upcoming guided walk at Piney Tract SGL 330 on June 27. \$6 per member, \$12 per nonmember.

Native Pollinators

Tuesday, July 14, 7–8:30pm / Online

Pollinators play a key role in the development of over 150 food crops in the United States, but scientists have identified long-term declines in pollinator population trends, including our native bumble bees. Learn about these native pollinators and how to help them, including a primer on Bumble Bee Watch. \$6 per member, \$12 per nonmember.

Ticks and Lyme Disease

Tuesday, August 11, 7–8:30pm / Online

Lyme disease has become a prevalent threat to those who venture outdoors. This presentation will explain the lifecycle of the tick and how the spirochete is transferred to humans. Do not let fear of Lyme disease keep you indoors; arm yourself with knowledge. \$6 per member, \$12 per nonmember.

Wetlands of Pennsylvania

Tuesday, August 18, 7–8:30pm / Online

PA has many different kinds of distinct wetlands. This program will help you discern fen from bog and swamp from marsh. \$6 per member, \$12 per nonmember.

Birds and Climate Change: A Warmer and Uncertain Future

Tuesday, September 8, 7–8:30pm / Online

Audubon's findings show that nearly two-thirds of North America's bird species are severely threatened by climate change. What is the evidence and how will birds in North America be impacted? This talk will cover the findings of Audubon's Survival by Degrees Report and the current research showing the challenges facing bird species across the continent. \$6 per member, \$12 per nonmember.

Popular Press and the Rise of Environmentalism

Wednesday, September 23, 7–8:30pm / Online

Major new stages in environmentalism in America were accompanied by and arguably encouraged by important published books, magazines and art. We will start with the art of Audubon and end with Silent Spring, visiting New England ponds, sequoia trees and Wisconsin shacks along the way. \$6 per member, \$12 per nonmember.

PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS

Fledglings Preschool Activities: Ages 3-5

Tuesdays: June 9, July 14, August 11, September 8 / SNP

Wednesdays: June 10, July 8, August 12, September 9 / BCNP

Thursdays: June 11, July 9, August 13, September 10 / BFNR

All programs run 10–11:15am

Give your 3–5 year old a head start on a lifetime of loving the outdoors. Fledglings programs incorporate stories, a walk, and activities to introduce new and fun nature themes to young participants. Time is spent both indoors and outside. Themes: April–Spring Peepers; May–Dandelion Seed; June–You Little Stinker; July–Lost Ladybug; August–Dragonfly Jewels; September–Meadow Meander. Parent or caregiver must be present; younger siblings (age 0–2) welcomed free of charge. If you have younger siblings, they are best in a backpack carrier rather than a stroller. \$5 per member child, \$10 per nonmember child.

BUFFALO CREEK NATURE PARK PROGRAMS

Stream Exploration Days

Saturday, July 11 / BCNP

Friday, August 14 / BCNP

Session 1: 10am–12pm; Session 2: 1–3pm

Are you looking for a fun way to cool off this summer while connecting with nature? Grab your family and friends and join us to learn about streams and how to keep our local waterways healthy. Explore Little Buffalo Creek, search for macroinvertebrates, and learn about watersheds and their ecology. This is an experiential program, so come prepared to get wet; water shoes are required and you may wish to pack a towel and/or change of clothes. Registration is required; space is limited. All children must be accompanied by a responsible adult; space is limited. \$5 per member, \$10 per nonmember.

SUCCOP NATURE PARK PROGRAMS

Meet the Conifers

Saturday, June 6, 1–2:30pm / SNP

This outdoor program will introduce participants to the coniferous trees of our area. We will identify the trees, explore their origins, and learn how they benefit the ecosystem. \$10 per member, \$20 per nonmember.

Butler County's PA Master Naturalist Program

August 4–October 20 / SNP

Tuesdays 6–8:30pm & Select Saturdays

Become a Master Naturalist! Join a statewide network of trained volunteers working to protect Pennsylvania's natural resources. Class covers topics from geology, birds, insects, trees, and more! Apply at pamasternaturalist.org.

Meadows of Pennsylvania

Saturday, August 8, 2–3:30pm / SNP

Our state was once covered by tundra, then prairies. Left to nature the vast majority of PA would be forested but there are a few conditions where open meadows will exist. We will head outside to identify native meadow plants. \$10 per member, \$15 per nonmember.

Bird Stories

Saturday, September 5, 10am–12pm / SNP

This program will examine impressive bird feats. We all know that the Peregrine Falcon is the fastest bird; however, that speed is only reached in a steep dive. We know that the Arctic Tern flies the most miles in its annual migration, but what about other ways to measure distance? Some record holders might surprise you! After an indoor session, we will head out on the trails to see who is flying through the nature park on their migration. \$10 per member, \$15 per nonmember.

Succop Nature Park Tree Hike

Saturday, July 11, 2–4pm / SNP

This park has 98+ species of woody plants! On this hike we will identify many species of trees and shrubs. We will learn some tips and tricks to identification by bark, fruit, flower, leaves, and branching patterns. \$10 per member, \$15 per nonmember.

CERTIFIED BACKYARD HABITAT PROGRAMS

CBH Lunch and Learn: Bird-friendly Alternatives to Commonly Planted Invasives

Wednesday, June 24, 12–1pm / Online

Create a beautiful landscape that birds enjoy just as much as you. We'll explore how replacing commonly planted invasive ornamentals with native alternatives can improve habitat for birds, pollinators, and other wildlife. We'll look at familiar problem plants like burning bush, Japanese barberry, and Bradford pear, and highlight native shrubs, trees, and perennials that offer similar beauty with far greater ecological value. \$6 per member, \$12 per nonmember.

CBH Lunch & Learn: Create a Backyard Firefly Haven

Wednesday, August 12, 12–1pm / Online

Discover how to turn your outdoor space into a sanctuary for fireflies! Explore the fascinating lives of fireflies and their crucial role in the ecosystem, then gain practical tips for creating a firefly-friendly backyard including landscaping ideas, reducing light pollution, and maintaining a healthy habitat. Free.

SHOP THE AUDUBON NATURE STORE

FOR EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO ENJOY THE BIRDS THIS SUMMER!

STORE HOURS
TUESDAY THROUGH SUNDAY
FROM 9AM TO 5PM

Visit aswp.org to learn more about our Nature Store, located at Beechwood Farms Nature Reserve.

Ruby-throated Hummingbird

TODD NATURE RESERVE PROGRAMS

Spore Explorers of Todd

Saturday, September 26, 10am–12pm / TNR

Take an exciting adventure into the beautiful Todd Nature Reserve and explore the fascinating world of fungi! Discover the hidden treasures of the forest floor and learn about the vital role fungi play in our ecosystems. Guided by an expert naturalist, you'll explore local habitats to identify mushrooms, understand their life cycles, and uncover their ecological importance. Bring your sense of adventure and get ready to become a spore explorer! Free for ASWP members; \$5 per nonmember.

STORE PROGRAMS

Eco-Market Vendor Applications Open

Accepting Applications: August 1–31

We're seeking artists whose work is made from recycled and/or sustainable materials and whose products are nature inspired! Sound like you? Then apply to be a vendor at our upcoming Holiday Eco Market, November 21 from 10am–4pm at Beechwood Farms Nature Reserve. Visit our website throughout August to apply!

Watercolor Workshop with Jes Reger Davis

Saturday, August 22 / BFNR

Two Workshops Available: 10am–12:30pm or 1:30pm–4pm

Immerse yourself in a creative, beginner-friendly watercolor workshop. Students will learn basic watercolor techniques and brushstrokes to create a loose, expressive painting. Students will be provided with materials and supplies, guidance, and a communal space to explore their creativity. Jes Reger Davis is a watercolorist and teaching artist from Wheeling, West Virginia, and a 2020 Tamarack Emerging Artist Fellow recipient. Jes' work can be found in ASWP Nature Stores. Space is limited—registration required. \$55 per ASWP member, \$65 per non-member.

MAKE YOUR YARD A NO MOW ZONE

Leaving a portion of un-mowed yard serves as an oasis for fireflies, ladybugs, butterflies, and bees. Spread the word with this beautifully illustrated sign. Made in Portland, OR.



MEMORIALS + HONORS

MEMORIALS

Robert Jay Palmiter
Antoinette Riffer

Sylvia Wall

Kathy Koffler
Kristi Krcal
John + Carol Linkes
Greg Wall

Jan Slater

Jonathan Erlen

Trish Lane

Janice + Jeff Beyer
Katie Hoke

Joyce Hoffmann

Kathy Newmeyer

Lynn Hamilton

Rhonda Jones
Anne Kaull
Chris + Tom Murray

Carol Ann Scharf

Nancy Niemczyk

Ruth Weir

George Weir

Cyndi Hartwig

Cindy + Mike Cavanaugh
Robert Perkins
Randy + Beth Soergel + Family
The Soergel Staff
Larry + Linda Voll + Family
The Wilsons

Franklin Blackstone

Robert Tarhi

Lewis + Sally Johnson

Dana Martin

Marilyn Bruschi

John Totten + Linda Kramer

Jack C. Kleberg

Anonymous

HONORS

Andrea McCrady

William McCrady

Larry Andersen

Gary Anderson

Gwil Price

Ruth Ann Pastorius

Deanna Purvis

Tria Dickerson

Tingle Barnes

John Culbertson
Sally Getty

Chris Bason

Henry Ewalt

Jim Bonner

Ginny Merchant

Jennifer Novelli

Kimberlee Love

Beechwood Education Staff

Elizabeth Spence

Tom + Jo Ann Succop

Augustus Succop

Sally Foster

John Totten + Linda Kramer

Dr. Carolyn B. Hendricks

Kathy D + William J Sault

Received through April 15, 2026. Please note that all tributes listed will also be recognized in the next printed bulletin.

Monarch Butterfly



ASK THE NATURALIST

WHAT PLANTS AND PRACTICES FAVOR FIREFLIES?



If you want more fireflies, the first step is to make your habitat insect-friendly in general. Start by encouraging diversity and health of native species while limiting the use of herbicides and pesticides.

Fireflies' specific needs are a little different from those of the pollinators that your colorful flowers attract. Most firefly adults do not eat and do not visit flowers. However, their larvae are voracious predators, eating tiny insects and invertebrates. They live in the debris zone of the forest and meadow floor, in the leaf litter and among the fallen, dry stalks of grass and herbs. Preserve leaf litter rather than sending it all to the curb. Let meadow plants dry in place. Don't till the soil. In a yard landscape, the duff under shrubs is a good hideaway. Select shrubs that provide thick leaf fall and rich soil. Plants with deep root systems will keep the soil from compacting. Ground-covering plants provide protection from predators and the elements.

Another consideration is darkness. Artificial light disrupts their mating displays. Enhance darkness by preserving heavy shade and maintaining hedgerows that block neighboring lights.

Finally, another important habitat feature for fireflies is a variety of layers from low to high. Each of the many local species has a slightly different mating dance. For many, the females sit on vegetation to respond to flying males, so perching and launching plants are essential. The height of the dance varies, too. Some fireflies stay low to the ground, some are high up in the canopy, and others occupy every level in between. Remember all these levels when selecting plants: ground cover, herb layer, shrub layer, understory, and canopy.

Of course, our Audubon Center for Native Plants has everything you need for a healthy firefly habitat. Here are our recommendations:

Broad Leaf Plants and Grasses for Shelter & Flight

Prep: *Eupatoriadelphus fistulosus*—Trumpetweed, *Hydrangea arborescens*—Wild Hydrangea, *Liquidambar styraciflua*—Sweetgum, *Liriodendron tulipifera*—Tulip Poplar, *Platanus occidentalis*—American Sycamore, *Quercus bicolor*—Swamp White Oak; Native grasses of all types.

Layered Habitat for Egg Laying/Shelter (Tall to

Small): *Pinus strobus*—Eastern White Pine, *Quercus bicolor*—Swamp White Oak, *Viburnum nudum*—Possumhaw, *Photinia pyrifolia*—Red Chokecherry, *Vernonia noveboracensis*—N.Y. Ironweed, *Symphotrichum puniceum*—Purplestem Aster, *Schizachyrium scoparium*—Little Bluestem, *Monarda fistulosa*—Wild Bergamot, *Gentiana clausa*—Bottle Gentian, *Packera aurea*—Golden Ragwort.

Plants That Build Soil (Leaves Break Down Quickly):

Bidens coronata—Tickseed, *Clematis viorna*—Leatherflower, *Conoclinium coelestinum*—Mistflower, *Dryopteris marginalis*—Wood Fern, *Mimulus ringens*—Monkeyflower, *Onoclea sensibilis*—Sensitive Fern, *Scutellaria incana*—Downy Skullcap, *Physocarpus opulifolius*—Ninebark, *Sambucus canadensis*—American Elderberry.

Plants That Help Conserve Soil Moisture:

Bryophytes—moss, *Onoclea sensibilis*—Sensitive Fern, *Packera aurea*—Golden Ragwort, *Saxifraga pensylvanica*—Swamp Saxifrage, *Zizia aurea*—Golden Alexanders.

Perennials With Strong & Deep Root Systems to Help Break Compaction and Provide Good Soil Habitat (Native Grasses in General):

Asclepias incarnata—Swamp milkweed, *Doellingeria umbellatus*—Flat-topped Aster, *Eupatoriadelphus fistulosus*—Trumpetweed, *Eupatorium perfoliatum*—Boneset, *Helenium autumnale*—Helen's flower, *Hibiscus moscheutos*—Rose-mallow, *Senna hebecarpa*—Wild Senna, *Silphium perfoliatum*—Cup Plant, *Solidago bicolor*—Silverrod, *Symphotrichum novae-angliae*—N.E. Aster, *Symphotrichum prenanthoides*—Zig Zag Aster, *Symphotrichum puniceum*—Purplestem Aster, *Verbena hastata*—Blue Vervain.

ASWP NEWS

PROGRAM SHOWCASE: BIRDS OF PREY SOARING SUCCESS

During January and February 2026, the Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania (ASWP) delivered 42 Birds of Prey programs across ASWP sites, schools, and community organizations, reaching a total of 875 attendees. These programs brought the natural history of raptors directly to the public, connecting participants of all ages to the vital ecological roles these remarkable birds play in healthy ecosystems.

Raptors—hawks, owls, eagles, and falcons—are apex predators that regulate prey populations and signal the overall health of the environment around them. As top-of-the-food-chain species, they act as living barometers of ecosystem well-being: when raptor populations thrive, it reflects clean air, clean water, and abundant prey. When they decline, it often signals deeper environmental problems such as habitat loss, pesticide contamination, or prey scarcity.

Central to ASWP's educational approach are ambassador birds—live raptors that cannot be released into the wild due to injury or imprinting, and who serve as living representatives of their species. These birds allow audiences to experience an up-close, personal connection with raptors that no photograph or video can replicate.

By educating the public about raptors, ASWP helps build a community of informed stewards who understand that protecting birds of prey means protecting entire ecosystems.



Raptors play a critical role in controlling rodent and small mammal populations, reducing agricultural damage and the spread of rodent-borne disease—services that benefit both wildlife and human communities alike.

Look for future bird of prey programs at all three ASWP locations (Beechwood, Buffalo Creek, and Succop) this coming August.

SOUTH SIDE PARK'S JURASSIC VALLEY

With support from the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR), ASWP partnered with Friends of South Side Park to plant trees in a section of the park known as Jurassic Valley. This planting was one of several sites supported through the DCNR grant, which funded work across 5.2 acres. Each site improves habitat and water quality in the surrounding area. The valley earned its nickname because dense areas of invasive plants created a landscape that looked as though dinosaurs could still be roaming there.

Ongoing invasive species removal is led primarily by Friends of South Side Park, whose volunteers have spent years restoring the park. For this project area, ASWP assisted with targeted invasive species management alongside the planting effort. With the help of dedicated volunteers, one acre of native trees and shrubs were planted, representing 13 native species and a total of 200 individual trees and shrubs. Projects like this highlight the power of community partnerships in restoring local landscapes. We extend our sincere thanks to the volunteers from Friends of South Side Park, led by Kitty Vagley, who supported this project, as well as their continued dedication to restore this critical landscape!

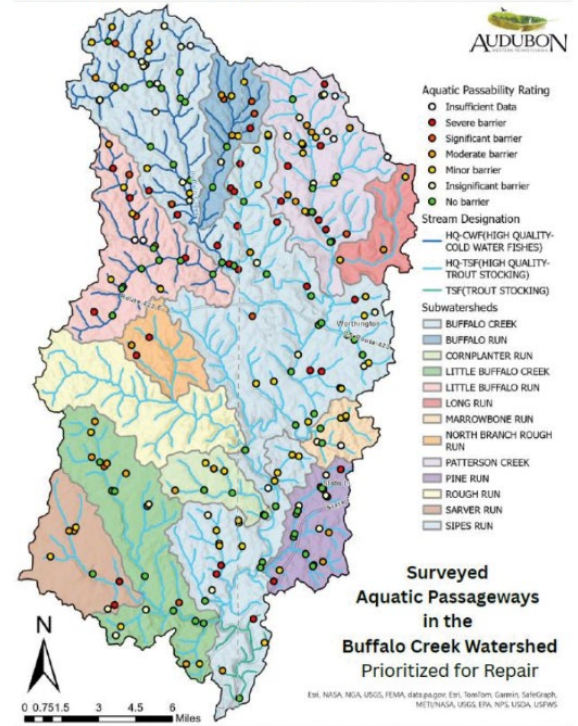


BUFFALO CREEK IMPLEMENTATION PLAN UPDATE

Over the past several years, Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania has taken a closer look at how roads and stream crossings affect the health of Buffalo Creek. Staff surveyed more than 250 locations where roads intersect streams, with a focus on culverts, the pipes and structures that carry water beneath roadways. When damaged, these structures can block aquatic life from moving freely through the watershed. Aquatic organisms such as fish, mussels, salamanders, and insects need connected aquatic networks to successfully carry out their life cycles and have the opportunity to reach higher quality habitats, which allow them to thrive. The team evaluated each site, finding that nearly one third of the crossings pose a moderate to severe barrier.

Understanding where these barriers occur is a critical step toward improving the overall health of the watershed. The culvert study pinpoints where upgrades or replacements will have the greatest impact. In collaboration with projects that include water quality monitoring and species surveys, this work ensures future restoration efforts remain strategic, effective, and grounded in data. This approach helps protect Buffalo Creek for both wildlife and the surrounding community.

Figure 4: Passability Scores for Surveyed Culverts



ROOTED IN PARTNERSHIP: GARDEN CLUBS SUPPORT NATIVE PLANTS

Thank you to The Garden Club of Allegheny County and Fox Chapel Garden Club for your support of our native plant efforts.

Thanks to a grant from The Garden Club of Allegheny County, a member of The Garden Club of America, we will be expanding our nursery staff and planning for efficiency and expansion. Our nursery is consistently selling 15,000 plants per year, which takes considerable planning, time and space. The support will enable us to continue producing high-quality plants while ensuring our nursery makes necessary adjustments to meet continued demand.

And thanks to Fox Chapel Garden Club, several native plant programs will be offered free of charge this season. Look for these in our calendar of events!



The Garden Club of Allegheny County grants committee working at Beechwood Farms Nature Reserve.

HELP SUPPORT FIREFLIES WITH ASWP'S MEADOW MIX

It's available in four blends (Sun, Partial Shade, Deer Resistant, and Butterfly Bumblebee Mix) and two size options (~100 sq. ft. & ~1,000 sq. ft.). To support fireflies, it's essential to provide a habitat rich in native plants which create ideal conditions for their life cycle, such as moist environments and native vegetation. Native grasses and wildflower meadows provide the perfect habitat for both larvae and adults.



VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

JEN BALSIGER

Pictured with an ambassador Red-tailed Hawk



Jen Balsiger is a standout volunteer with the Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania, dedicating much of her time to working with our ambassador raptors. Ambassador animals are non-releasable wildlife that, due to injury or other circumstances, cannot survive in the wild. Instead, they live under expert human care and help people better understand their species, habitats, and conservation needs.

How long have you been a volunteer at ASWP?

I started with the raptors in October 2024.

What portion(s) of ASWP do you volunteer with?

I am a raptor caretaker. I've also led educational programs with the raptors. Occasionally I lead the 9am naturalist walks. I've led several at Todd and two at Beechwood.

What is something you find special about ASWP?

When I became interested in birding, ASWP was the place I found that enabled me to explore that interest. Through the naturalist walks and Master Birding program, I've learned so much and have been able to share that interest with others. I moved back to PA in 2024 after living in Colorado and ASWP was a place where I found community. I've made a lot of friends through ASWP, and that really made my transition back home to PA a lot easier.

Check out aswp.org for volunteer opportunities or reach out to us via email at volunteer@aswp.org.

Why do you enjoy being a volunteer?

I'm a big animal person and I love being able to work with the raptors. They each have their own personality and getting to interact with them brings me a lot of joy. They are really special and I love getting to share their magic with others through ASWP's programs.

Do you have any memorable moments during your time as a volunteer?

The most impactful moments for me are when I get to train with the hawk. In order to get close to her, I have to be someone she trusts. It requires a lot of patience and practice, but when she chooses to hop on my glove, it's just the best moment.

What would you say to someone who is thinking of volunteering at ASWP?

ASWP has a lot of different volunteer opportunities from the ones I've mentioned to working with kids and park cleanup days. Whatever your interest, ASWP has something for you. Volunteering is a great way to meet people and get out into nature. I definitely recommend getting involved!

What is your favorite bird?

Red-tailed Hawk, of course!

AN UPDATE ON OUR MEMBERSHIP COMMUNICATIONS

Just like birds molting old feathers, we are letting go of something we no longer need. We all have so many pieces of paper and plastic in our wallets, and ASWP is here to help! Starting February 1, 2026, ASWP converted to a cardless membership system. When visiting the Beechwood Nature Store, members can simply provide their last name at checkout to receive member benefits—no card required! As part of our ongoing effort to keep members informed, we also want to be transparent about our renewal communications. When your membership is due for renewal, you will receive an email reminder prior to its expiration. If your membership expires, you will receive a letter in the mail shortly after, followed by a final mailed reminder if your membership remains lapsed after three months. These efforts reduce our environmental impact while keeping your experience just as seamless as ever. Thank you for being part of the ASWP community and if you have any questions, we are always happy to help.



AUDUBON
WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA

614 Dorseyville Road
Pittsburgh, PA 15238-1618