

Cooks Current

"To protect, preserve and improve the quality of water, land and life in the Cooks Creek Watershed"

Volume 14, Issue 1

Newsletter of the Cooks Creek Watershed

Winter 2017

2017 Events

Regular Board Meetings:

Springtown Fire House- 7:30PM

Jan. 26, Feb. 23, Mar. 23, Apr. 27, May 25, June 22, July 27, Aug. 24, Sept. 28, Oct. 26, Nov. 16 (3rd Thursday), Dec. 21 (3rd Thursday). All are welcome! We appreciate your involvement!

Special Events

Apr. 1, Spring Clean-Up

Apr. 27, Annual Meeting

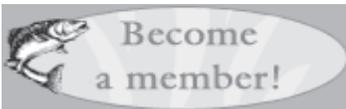
June 17, Mini Monster Mayhem

July 8, Native Plant and Invasive Workshop

Oct. 7, Fall Dinner

Oct. 14, Durham Community Day

Nov 11, Fall Clean-Up



See back for details!

We're on the web!
www.cooks creekpa.org

Cooks Current is a publication of the Cooks Creek Watershed Association.

Board Members:

President: W. Scott Douglas

Vice President: Hans Reimann

Treasurer: Jim Orben

Communications Director/Recording Secretary/Editor: Lois Oleksa

Marketing and Public Relations: Lois Oleksa

Additional Members: Stephen Smith, MD, Sarah Snider

Layout & Graphic Design: Ellie Scheitrum

From Across the Board...

With the new Trump administration showing that it has little regard for the environment, we need our members to stay current and involved now more than ever. While there may be a lot of room for improvement in the EPA, dismantling the Waters of the U.S. rule or gutting the Clean Air and Clean Water Acts are not things that should be considered. These rules are especially important for small watersheds like our own, where there is little in the way of public access for recreation to generate popular support to keep it clean and safe.

Remember that while we don't have pressure for fracking or other mineral extraction activities here, our Exceptional Value status is perhaps the only thing that we can hold out to contain the outside interests who want to use our "greenway" as a conduit for power and pipelines, or to take advantage of our wide open spaces to build new high end housing developments "with a view".

Unfortunately, even our EV status may not be



*Pictured left to right: Scott Douglas, David Juall, Kathy Gentner, Brian Fitzpatrick, Ann Marshall, John Crum, Julia Crum, David Oleksa, and Jeff Porter.
Photo by Kathy Gentner*

enough to keep out infrastructure projects considered by someone in Washington to be "in the national interest". Just ask the folks at the Standing Rock Reservation.

Just because the aforementioned Acts are Federal rules does not mean that their loss would not reduce our local protections. For example, the Clean Water Act's water quality provisions are delegated to the State to implement. Pennsylvania has always felt that this

was an "unfunded mandate" and wanted to opt out of oversight as late as the mid-1990s. Given the current anti-tax sentiment in Harrisburg, any relaxation of Federal requirements would likely be reflected in a reduction of regulatory or enforcement staff here. I would argue that PADEP oversight is meager enough as it is.

But further rollbacks might, in turn, put considerable pressure on our

(Continued to page 4)

Creature Feature: American Mink (*Neovison vison*)

By: W. Scott Douglas

This is the 39th installment in a series of articles on the fauna of the Cooks Creek.

Recently, I have heard many reports of large, dark furry animals with bear-like ears coming in close to people's backyards. While many believe that they are seeing Fishers (see a previous creature feature), it may be that at least some of these sightings are of mink. Mink like to live near water; they frequent lakes, ponds, rivers, streams and marshes throughout our area. Most of my sightings have been on a riverbank. Fishers, on the other hand prefer the deep woods. We have many mink in the Watershed, and they are not skittish. I have personally seen quite a few and been able to get quite close. I have yet to see a Fisher. Mink are small, about the size of a house cat, but very dark brown/black in color, are slender and have short legs. Fishers, by contrast, are twice as big, with a much longer, more luxurious tail. Both run in the classic weasel fashion, undulating along with otter-like grace. While both animals climb trees well, the mink is more likely to seek low shelter, whereas the Fisher is more likely to climb when threatened.



The American mink is the most widely distributed member of the weasel family. It ranges from Alaska and northern Canada down to South America and into Asia. It is actually invasive in Europe where it competes with its European cousins the European mink and Polecat. Much to the distress of many, it is the most commonly raised animal for fur. In its natural habitat, the mink is a voracious predator, catching and eating anything it can from rodents to frogs to birds. They are particularly fond of muskrats. Mink are considered semi-aquatic; they are excellent swimmers and can easily catch fish larger than themselves. Man and canids (foxes, coyotes, wolves and dogs) are their primary predators, but bobcats and owls take some

as well. Mink typically live 3-5 years in the wild, but in captivity may live 10 years or longer.

Mink are active all year round, and mating occurs in mid to late winter and early spring. Gestation can take anywhere from 40-75 days, with 3-4 kits being born thereafter. Kits are blind and helpless at birth, but grow quickly. They are weaned at 5 weeks and learn to hunt at 8 weeks. They become sexually mature in time for the next winter's breeding season. Mink are opportunistic about dens, using hollow logs, rock crevices, old muskrat dens or windfalls, pretty much any sheltered area as long as it is near the water. If necessary, they will dig tunnels, ending in a small chamber lined with feathers and straw. Mink do not call, but make squeaky noises when chasing prey and will scream loudly when threatened. They mark their territory with musk scent from their anal glands and will not hesitate to empty these glands at their enemies, much like a skunk. Mink will stand their ground when cornered, and try to scare you off with a combination of teeth baring and screaming. You would think this would make them hard to care for, but the fact is that they can make suitable pets if handled from an early age.

If you want to see a mink, you need to spend some time in the parts of the watershed where the woods and water intersect. A tree stand would give you the perspective to scout out larger areas, but I like the thrill of coming upon them simply by chance, when cruising a riverbank or kayaking. Keep your eyes peeled, walk quietly, and you will be rewarded.



Botanical Focus: Hackberry (*Celtis occidentalis*)

This is the 2nd installment in a series of articles on the flora of the Cooks Creek Watershed.

By: David Oleksa

Walking through the wooded area of our property, along Cooks Creek, I noticed several nicely shaped trees with an unusual bark pattern. The larger branches and trunk had numerous corky ridges and warts. Most of the trees were relatively small with trunks about eight inches in diameter. However, I did find one large specimen along a fence row well over two feet in diameter and about 70 to 80 feet tall.



Leaf and bark of tree

<http://www.extension.iastate.edu/forestry/iowa>

Doing a little research led me to find that these were specimens of *Celtis occidentalis*, or as it is commonly known “Hackberry”. This often ignored (by the public) tree is thought of by tree experts as “one tough tree”. It is found east of the Rockies and from southern Canada to northern Florida. It can grow in nearly any type of soil; doing equally well in loamy, moist, well-drained, sandy, wet, clay, acidic or alkaline soils. It is able to survive strong winds, heat, dryness, salt, and even high pollution levels. It grows at a relatively fast rate with height increases of 13 to 24 inches per year being common.

Because of its toughness and versatility it can be used in the country in effective wind breaks, riparian plantings, and for highway beautification. In the city, it is a natural for landscaping in parks and along boulevards.

The hackberry is an excellent tree for wildlife with its fruit (which stays on the tree through the winter) being a favorite of squirrels and many species of birds including cedar waxwings, mockingbirds and robins. The tree also attracts many butterfly species including tawny, emperor, question mark, comma, morning cloak and hackberry. The Native Americans used the outer shell of the hackberry seed to season their food in much the same way we use pepper.

You can find references to the hackberry in various survival manuals due to its fruit being of high nutritional value. It is one of the few red berries found in the wild which are suitable for eating. There is little flesh on the berry but the hard seed in the center is loaded with protein and fats. The best way to enjoy the berries is to crush them with a mortar and pestle to create a paste which can be toasted into something resembling an energy bar; or you can blend the paste with water, leave it overnight and then strain it to make a drink similar to almond milk.

In the early days, the tough but flexible wood was used for barrel hoops and durable hackberry wood flooring could be found in many pioneer cabins. The wood is similar to ash and currently is used for making boxes, pallets and for firewood.

How the tree got its name is interesting. The word “hackberry” was derived from an old Scottish word meaning “hag” or “old woman”. The warty appearance of the bark might have reminded folks of an old face in olden times.

From an arborist point of view, the hackberry is a good stand-in for the American elm which sadly is fading out of existence due to the spread of blight. We are fortunate to have the hackberry in our watershed. Its leaf litter is similar to the black walnut’s which discourages the growth of other plants, especially invasives. But the hackberry’s stately appearance bestows a certain elegance wherever it is found.

(Continues from page 1)

elected officials to relax stormwater management and buffer requirements, especially for our fragile headwaters and wetlands.

What can you do about all this? Well, despite the President's penchant for tweeting out disdain for naysayers, I encourage you to do just that. Let Senators Casey and Toomey and Congressman Fitzpatrick know that you are pro-environment and that you want them to keep the Clean Water and Clean Air Acts fully enacted. Tell them you don't support dismantling of the EPA. I recently had lunch with Brian Fitzpatrick and found that he is highly supportive of sound environmental protections, and he is supportive of our efforts to force FERC to properly review and consider our concerns regarding PennEast (he was recently interviewed in the Courier Times). He is also an advocate for property rights, and feels that eminent domain is over-used. But remember, he is a newly minted Congressman, so he needs to hear from YOU regarding your viewpoints, before others get his ear (www.brianfitzpatrick.congress.gov). Casey has already proven himself to be pro-environment, visit his webpage to stay up on his efforts to keep our air and water clean (www.casey.senate.gov). Find Senator Toomey at www.toomey.senate.gov.

And speaking of PennEast, do consider coming down to Washington Crossing Historic Park Visitor Center, 1112 River Road, Washington Crossing, Pa. on March 15 to pressure the Delaware River Basin Commission to make their fracking moratorium permanent in the Delaware Watershed. As you know, the Cooks Creek is part of the Delaware Watershed, so this ban would ensure that no fracking ever occurred in our watershed, but more importantly, it would ensure that no one would try to use our groundwater for fracking here or anywhere close by. You can learn more about this event by going to the Delaware Riverkeeper website at www.delawareriverkeeper.org. If you live in Springfield, keep your eye out for a planning survey from the Township. There will be questions there looking for your input on a number of issues including oil and gas extraction and stormwater protections. Make sure your viewpoints are included in the revisions to the Comprehensive Plan.

On a cheerier note, we have our spring events to consider! We'd love to have you come out to help clean up our roadways of winter trash on Saturday April 1 (at the Springtown Firehouse, see insert) and get some of our famous homemade chili for lunch. We will be participating in the Springfield EAC's environmental workshop at the Springtown Rod and Gun Club on April 29 from 1 to 4 pm. There will be a Bird Town visit from Audubon's Steve Saffier on March 9 at the Springfield Township building at 7 pm. And as usual, there will be a Mini-Monster Mayhem on Saturday June 17 from 9 to noon at my house in Springtown. I encourage you to come and play in the creek, and bring your children/grandchildren/or your own inner child. It's fun!

Yours in conservation

W. Scott Douglas

President

Children's Backyard: What is Pith?

By Lois Oleksa

In the study of plants (botany) the spongy, soft material found in the middle of stems and roots is called pith. This tissue is also called medulla, being found in the middle of a plant. The cells making up this tissue are large and have thin cell walls. What do these cells do? They store and transport nutrients through a plant's stem, branches, leaves and roots. When pith grows it is soft, spongy and white or pale in color. When the pith tissue gets older it darkens to a deep brown color. As the plant gets older the pith is replaced by xylem which is not spongy and soft but woody.

Medulla tissue may dry out and disintegrate leaving a hollow stem. Water and nutrients move up and down the stem and branches of a plant. Large plants like trees have medulla tissue but small plants like mosses, liverworts and algae don't have medulla tissue.



Pith can be used for practical purposes. In Asia, the rice paper shrub has medulla tissue used to make edible rice paper. Some rushes have medulla tissue from which wicks for candles are made. The plant called "shola", growing in India has pith which was used to make pith helmets – lightweight helmets that protect you from the sun.

Tetrapanax papyriferum, a member of the ginseng family, is made into pith paper. Workers, with a big knife, slice its pith into a smooth, bone-white paper. The knife is moved around and around the pith cutting off a sheet of delicate paper. Cutting this paper is an art not easily mastered. The paper has great strength in its youth, and when damp may be stretched and folded into almost any shape, which is why Chinese for centuries have used pith paper to make artificial flowers and decorative hairpins. It absorbs watercolors or tempera paint readily; paint fills the hollows in the plant pith cells which are cut/shaved off, creating a relief texture with a velvety visual depth. Harvard University's Botany Libraries have collections of botanical paintings on pith paper.

Children's Backyard activity: Discover pith while making a Whistle

By: Lois Oleksa

1. Identify an elderberry shrub from which you'll cut a finger length piece of older dried wood.

Fig. 1



2. Take a look at the pith. Scrape off the bark from the twig using a knife. Be careful.

Fig. 2



3. Using another thinner twig or, better yet, a metal coat hanger, poke out the pith.

Fig. 3



Green Tip #37: Comfort Below Freezing

By W. Scott Douglas



When I was a boy, I was very involved with Scouting...and I still am to this day. Growing up in northern Vermont, as I did, meant that for many of my outdoor adventures the mercury dipped below the freezing mark. Sometimes it even dipped below the zero mark. We learned not only to be safe outside at very low temperatures, but to be comfortable and to have fun. Don't get me wrong, cold weather can be very dangerous, but by keeping in mind a few simple things it doesn't have to ruin your outside fun. I recently gave a talk to the Durham EAC on staying warm in the winter and here are the main points from that talk:

- Only trapped warm air will keep you warm, wear multiple layers and keep them dry
- Synthetics, wool and silk retain heat even when wet, cotton actually sucks heat out of you when wet; always avoid cotton for your inner and outer layers
- A cool, wet day at 40 degrees Fahrenheit can be more dangerous than a cold, dry day at 10 degrees Fahrenheit
- Stay active; muscle use generates heat
- Avoid overheating, sweating now means you will be cold later
- Manage your comfort; if you get warm, reduce layers; if cold, add layers
- Keep your skin covered to avoid frostbite
- Eat frequent high carbohydrate, high fat meals before and during low temperature excursions
- Never use alcohol when outside in the cold, it rapidly depletes your body's ability to stay warm
- Watch out for each other, behavioral changes can be a sign of hypothermia



Renew Your Membership

Cooks Creek is an important resource for our community. Don't forget to renew your membership and stay up to date on issues concerning our Watershed.

If you want to get more involved, come to a meeting and share your talents and interests!

Find the membership form on the back page.

Back to the Past: The Old Jasper Mine

A column highlighting the natural history of the Watershed.

From the random notes of B.F. Fackenthal

Vol. 1 of 3 newspaper article

Durham—Its Primitive Inhabitants by Antiquary

Transcribed by: Jim Walter

For many years it was not generally known among archaeologists where the Indians of eastern Pennsylvania and New Jersey obtained their supply of jasper for the manufacture of arrow heads. The existence of such a mine or quarry in Durham has been known to our local collectors for a long time.

The writer has known it since 1873, and others were acquainted with it long before that date. But strange to say, all knowledge of it was confined to those living in its immediate vicinity, and it is only within the last few years that any account of it has reached the scientific world at large. When it first became known it was the only excavation of its kind known in our state, but since then five or six similar mines have been discovered through the research of Dr. Abbott and H.C. Mercer. All of these have been found in the last two years, and all are located along the line of the Durham and Reading hills.

The old Durham mine is situated on the southern slope of Rattlesnake Hill, about a mile west of the Delaware river, on a farm of Cooper and Hewitt. The excavations made by ancient miners are still plainly visible. They are surrounded by a small tract of woodland, which has thus far preserved them from destruction by the plow. The pit from which the mineral was quarried is of considerable size. The depth can only be guessed at, as the farmers have hauled into it the stones from the surrounding fields. At the sides of the pit are still to be seen the heaps of earth and masses of jasper thrown out by the miners. The surrounding fields are thickly strewn with fragments of red, yellow and brown jasper. No mining tools have been found except a large number of stone hammers. These are ordinary cobble stones brought from the Delaware, and are without the finger pits common to ordinary Indian hammers. Their battered and broken edges tell the story of their use. But a small number of arrow points have been found in the vicinity of the mine. The material was quarried and broken into blocks suitable for transportation to the villages in the surrounding country, and there formed into spears, arrow heads, and other implements. Close by the mine and surrounded by the same piece of woodland is

(Continued to page 11)

(Continued from page 10)

a small pond that is always well filled in winter and early spring but dry during the summer months. There seems to be indications that the bed of this pond was originally a depression dug out by the miners in search of jasper. This small piece of woodland is very interesting from a botanical stand point. Some years ago, the stalks of a strange plant were found there. After several years of patient waiting the plant produced a single flower. It proved to be a specimen of *White Gentian*. Dr.T.C. Porter, the veteran botanist of Lafayette College informs us that this plant is found in no other place in the Delaware Valley. On the same spot is found another plant, equally rare, in this section.

This proved to be *Desmodium humifusium*, a southern form of tick-trefoil, which had been apparently planted there intentionally or by mere accident. In some way the seeds of these plants were brought hither by the Indians in their visits for supplies of jasper. Through all the years that have passed since the Indian forever left the locality, these plants have never left themselves without representatives, nor have they spread outside this small piece of woodland. They are with us today to aid us in the study of the habits and customs of our primitive population.

Notice!

It's Annual Meeting Time again!

Not just another Board Meeting, the Annual Meeting is a chance to discuss our year, plan for next year, elect officers and recognize the hard work of our members.

This meeting is a requirement of our 501c3 status, but is also a great time to

“put in your two cents” about what the CCWA does with YOUR money.

Make a difference, plan on attending!

Thursday, April 27, 2017 @ 7:30 PM @ Springtown Fire Company

Missing Snow

If you are like me, you might be enjoying our warm weather and thinking that perhaps we are most fortunate to get through a January without much ice and snow or even a substantial wintry mix. Climate change in PA doesn't seem all that bad. But when I read the notice of a "Drought Watch" in our part of Bucks County, I had second thoughts. What is going on in our backyards? Our small pond still has water and there are even muddy areas in our field. I can follow the deer trails through our woods but I can't follow animal tracks through the snow.

During a conversation with Scott Douglas, president of our Watershed Association, I learned that it was the actual snow cover, not the amount of annual precipitation that is making a difference. When snow falls and accumulates it blankets the ground and insulates and protects our plants and trees. As the snow melts slowly in the spring, it seeps into the earth, reaching down to the roots of those same plants and trees. The melting water oozes even deeper and helps to restore the level of our ground water and revitalize our springs, streams, and wells.

On the other hand when rain falls quickly and we have one or two inches of rain on a day in January, most of that rain enters our waterways as runoff. The ground is too frozen for much of the water to be absorbed so our creeks and rivers are full or swollen for a few days and then the extra water flows to the sea. If you depend on a reservoir for your water supply perhaps there is not much difference between falling rain and snow but if you depend on ground water there is cause for concern.

Climate change is happening here and now in the Cooks Creek Watershed. When I was a child I could ice skate on the nearby ponds but this year even my small frog pond didn't freeze. I am still hoping that February will bring us a few inches of snow, not because I love to shovel or even ski, but because snow is part of the beauty of winter and I don't want our wells to dry up next summer. Please continue to support our Watershed and advocate for laws that protect not only the clean water we all depend on but laws that reduce carbon emissions and address another threat to our supply of fresh water, climate change that affects not only our coastlines and oceans but the way precipitation affects life in the Cooks Creek Watershed.

By: Debra Orben January 7, 2017



Recycle! Local Recycling Information

Durham Township Recycling Center

Location: Municipal Building, 215 Old Furnace Rd, Durham

1st Saturday of every month (2nd Saturday if 1st Saturday is on a holiday weekend)

Hours: 8:00AM – 12:00 noon, 1:00PM-4:00PM, (call ahead)

Accepting newspapers, magazines, junk mail, phone books, glass, tin, plastic, aluminum and cardboard, and CFL bulbs, rechargeable batteries (during office hours).

Please note that this facility is available to all, not just Durham Township residents!

Contact the township building for more info. 610-346-8911

Springfield Township

Location: Township Building, 2320 Township Road

Paper Recycling Bin Available at Township Building.

A Recycling bin was recently placed here and is available to anyone. Cut down on trash and help the township earn extra money. You can drop off: Magazines, Shopping Catalogs, Phone Books, Newspapers, Office and School Papers, Mail.

Please do NOT include: Plastic, glass, metal, trash

Hours: Anytime ; See website: www.springfieldbucks.org or call (610) 346-6700.

Blinderman & Son

Location: 1320 Whitaker St, Hellertown. 610-838-9221

Hours:
7:30AM – 4:00 PM, Monday – Friday

7:30 AM – 11:30AM, Saturday

Accepting cardboard and most metals.

City of Bethlehem Theis/Cornfeld Recycling Center

Web site: www.bethlehem-pa.gov/recycle/services/theis_cornfeld.htm

Location: 635 Illick's Mill Rd, Bethlehem

Phone: 610-865-7082 Hours: Weekdays: 9AM to 5 PM, Saturday 9 AM to 4 PM, Sunday 11AM to 4 PM

Accepting glass, cans, plastics, newspapers, all books, magazines, catalogs, cardboard, mixed office paper, metals, textiles (clothing, shoes, etc.), large appliances (certified freon-free). Call or go to the web site for specifics.

Bonus!! They provide FREE on site shredding services for businesses and private individuals. If you have 4 or more boxes, call 610-865-7082 to schedule an appointment.

Schedules of Local Government Meetings

Springfield Township:

www.springfieldbucks.org

610-346-6700

2320 Township Road

Supervisors: 2nd Tuesday @ 7:30 PM

Planning Commission: 1st Wed. @ 7 PM

Supervisors/Planning Commission

Work Session: 3rd Thurs. @ 7 PM

Environmental Advisory Council:

2nd Thurs. @ 7:30 PM

Open Space Committee:

1st Tuesday @ 7:30PM

Historic Commission:

3rd Tuesday @ 7:30 PM

Durham Township:

www.durhamtownship.org

610-346-8911

215 Old Furnace Road

Supervisors: 2nd Tuesday @ 7:30 PM

Planning Commission:

1st Tues. @ 7:30 PM

EAC: 3rd Tues. @ 7:30 PM

Lower Saucon:

www.lowersaucontownship.org

610-865-3291

3700 Old Philadelphia Pike

Council: 1st and 3rd Wed. @ 7 PM

Planning Commission:

3rd Thurs. @ 7 PM

EAC: 1st Tues. @ 7 PM

Williams Township:

www.williamstwp.org

610-258-6060

655 Cider Press Road

Supervisors: 2nd Wed. @ 7 PM

Planning Commission: 3rd Wed. @ 7 PM

Land Preservation Board:

3rd Mon. @ 7 PM

Richland Township:

www.richlandtownship.org

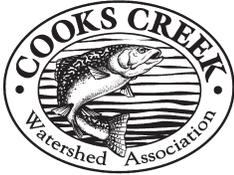
215-536-4066

1328 California Road

Supervisors: 2nd and 4th Mon. @ 7 PM

Planning Commission: 3rd Tues. @ 7 PM

Preservation Board: 2nd Thurs. @ 7 PM



Cooks Creek Watershed Association
 P.O. Box 45
 Springtown, PA 18081
 www.cooks creekpa.org

If you hold precious the beauty that surrounds us in the Cooks Creek Watershed area and would like to be actively involved in its preservation, then consider joining our association as a member. Reach out to your community! We would love to hear from you! Please drop us a line at info@cooks creekpa.org

CCWA is a 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization.



Find us on Facebook

Please Join Us... Cooks Creek Watershed Association-Membership Form

All of us who reside in the area enjoy the beauty of Cooks Creek.

Those of us who are fortunate enough to live here are dependent upon this watershed not only for the beauty of the creek but our wells, the wetlands, the wildflowers and all of the beautiful landscapes in our townships.

It's up to all of us to protect this treasure. The Cooks Creek Watershed Association asks that you become a member and help in the task of protecting this special resource.

Name: _____

Other household members: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

Interests: (circle)

Newsletter	Website	Roadside Cleanup	Event Planning
Membership	Fundraising	Stream Studies	Wherever I'm Needed

Individual Membership Fee: \$ 15.00 per year _____

Family Membership Fee: \$ 25.00 per year _____

Student Membership Fee: \$ 10.00 per year _____

Donation: to legal defense fund: _____

Total:

Please detach and mail to Cooks Creek Watershed Association , (CCWA)

P.O. Box 45, Springtown, PA 18081. **THANK YOU!**

Checks can be made payable to Cooks Creek Watershed Association.

CCWA is a 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization.