

River Talk

Newsletter of the Carantouan Greenway



Fall 2015

New Trails and Vernal Pools



Working their way up the slope clearing limbs and briars for the new trail.

The Carantouan Greenway was fortunate to receive the support of the Tioga County Soil and Water Conservation

District that had a grant to facilitate a project with a not-for-profit group. The Greenway suggested that we could use that resource

to do two things. One would be to modify our trail that was a deadend going to the Barton landfill and modify the trail so that it made a complete loop and did not necessitate backtracking. The other was to create another vernal pool or two at the base of the trail. The crew, which did the work, were the skilled technicians of the Upper Susquehanna Coalition (USC). They created the loop trail, created not one but three vernal pools and seeded the entire disturbed site so that there was absolutely no run-off or erosion from their efforts. It was, and is, an incredible job and we are grateful to our contributing partners in enriching the Wildwood Reserve for public use.



Work progresses on the shallow vernal pool that will create a sanctuary for mating insects and amphibians during the spring and summer.



In a few short months Mother Nature has turned the new pool into a thriving, verdant ecosystem.

DAR Presents Bench at Forbidden Path

The Greenway is fortunate to have charitable organizations that support us with gifts. That goodwill was demonstrated by the local Daughters of the American Revolution as the



Greenway received a concrete bench located at the Carantouan Spring, located at the end of Forbidden Path. The trailhead for the path can be entered at the intersection of Rt. 220 and Rt. 17C in Waverly near the two signs for the Forbidden Path and Trails of Tioga. The trail crosses a wooden bridge and then splits for a short loop to the left, but the trail to the right proceeds through the woods for approximately half a mile to the spring.

In this issue

- August
- Birdhouses
- Donations
- DAR Presents Bench at Forbidden Path
- Membership Renewal
- New Trails and Vernal Pools
- Old Man in the Woods
- Vernal Pool Tour

Sayre Library & Greenway Donate Birdhouses to Community



As part of the Sayre Library Summer Reading Program, the Carantouan Greenway's Theresa Pipher was the invited Environmental Superhero guest on June 30th, along with local author Maureen Wright.

As part of the day's presentations, Sayre students

dressed in costume to tell stories of the Cardinal, Owl and Woodpecker. Costumes were designed and created by Marilyn Palmer.

Local artist Stephanie Mullen worked with Pipher and Library Director Holly Bradley to assist dozens of participating children in decorating birdhouses with natural and ornate materials.

Ralph Geiger crafted and generously donated the beautiful wooden boxes to be decorated; which were in turn donated to the Sayre House of Hope and Sayre Health, to be distributed to bird-loving seniors.

Vernal Pool Guided Tour

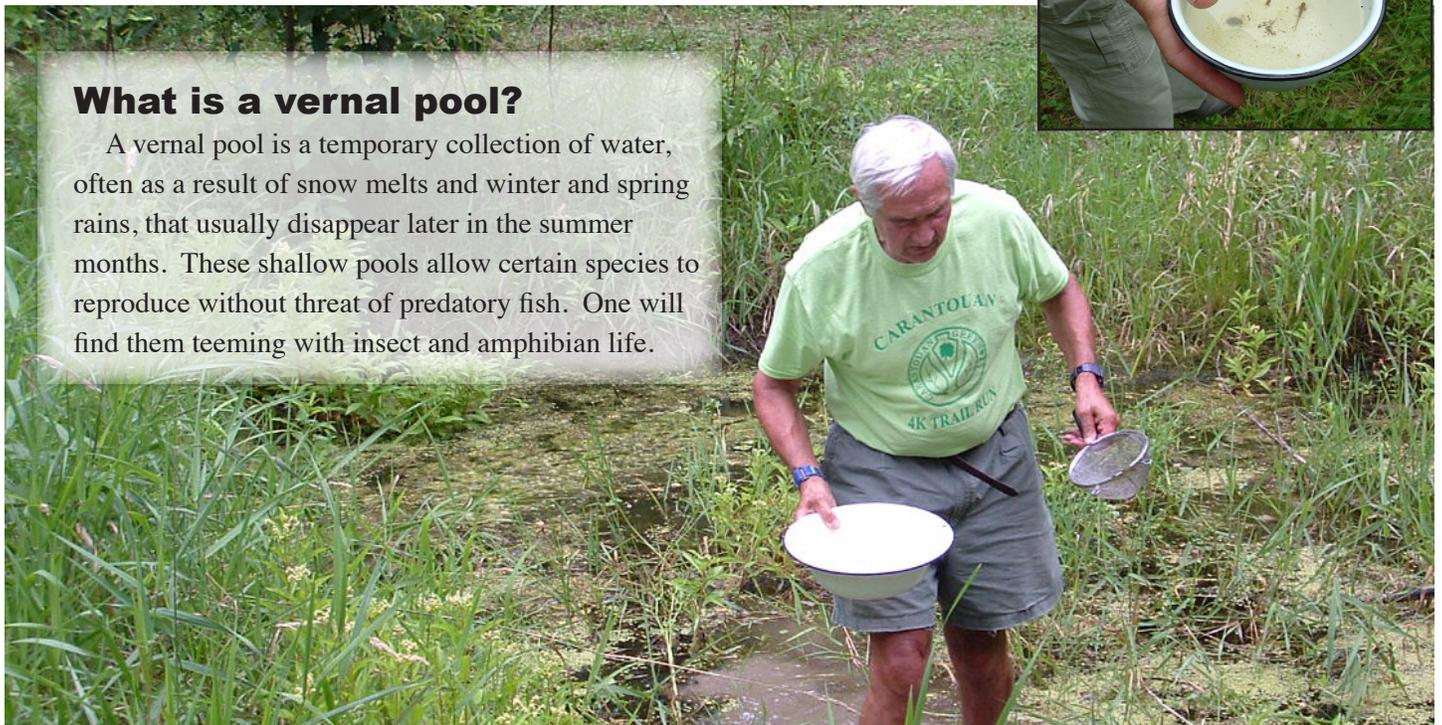
In July Marty Borko astounded visitors with an impressive presentation describing the seasonal changes and habitats of the Wildwood Preserve's oldest vernal pool as he waded into the pool and collected a bucket of water, full of wiggly specimens. Later, with the aid of a microscope, he described the subjects along with some of their rather odd habits. For example, most were unaware that the dragonfly breathes through gills in their rectum and propel themselves by jetting the water through the anus. He also described other fascinating facts like the difference

between a damselfly and a dragonfly and pointed out the diverse collection of species that inhabit the pool including spotted salamanders, pickerel frogs, water scorpions, along with outlining the difference between a mayfly and a stonefly. If you ever have the opportunity to join one of Marty's guided tours you will walk away filled with the wonder of nature and amazed by his encyclopedic knowledge of the natural world.



What is a vernal pool?

A vernal pool is a temporary collection of water, often as a result of snow melts and winter and spring rains, that usually disappear later in the summer months. These shallow pools allow certain species to reproduce without threat of predatory fish. One will find them teeming with insect and amphibian life.



Do You Know About the Old Man in the Woods?



Old-man-of-the-woods mushroom.
Photo credit: liquiddropart.com

This spring has been an exceptional year for the proliferation of a variety of fungi off our Wildwood trails. I was able to identify my first old-man-of-the-woods, a very dark, hairy mushroom.

Fungi of all types are primarily saprophytes; organisms that feed on the dead or decaying tissue. Sometimes these parasites feed on living tissue, but this is not common with the exception of symbiotic mycelia that facilitate plant growth.

There are three major groups of fungi; those with gills, those with pores and those with the spore forming surfaces

contained as in puffballs. Fungi are major recyclers where they become partners with bacteria to reduce the carcasses and make the nutrients available for the next generation. I have included a photo of a log that is being recycled by this group of fungus.

In general, for every ounce of this reproductive structure in the photo there would be 100 ounces of fungal threads, or mycelia, breaking down the woody remains. Fungi and bacteria are true partners in maintaining a healthy environment through decomposition.

- Marty Borko



August

It is August 6th and the dry weather and winds are creating brown lawns and curling leaves. The last and productive vernal pool at Wildwood is drying up and the last few puddles hold very little water. The deepest pool patch, about an inch deep, holds three water scorpions lying still joined by the darker shells of about a dozen snails. By tomorrow there will only be mud and over the weekend mud cracks. Earlier in the year the pool produced loads of wood frog tadpoles that developed and left the pool in the early summer, with a few of them serving as food for the visiting little green heron. At the end of July the pool provided water scorpions, predaceous dragonfly and damselfly larvae with their extensible lips, a tiny tadpole as well as the gilled spotted salamander larvae. Did the last two weeks give these specimens enough time to transform and escape the desiccation of the pool?

The second growth in the alfalfa field is filled with its purple flowers being overshadowed by a scattering of white umbel inflorescences of wild carrot or Queen Anne's Lace. The hedgerow staple of staghorn sumac is in full expression of its red fruit clusters and the climbing vines of the white-flowered virgin's bower cover the lower vegetation. The robins, catbirds and song sparrows are regularly calling from and darting back and forth from field to hedgerow, which appears to be the favored nesting site of the willow flycatcher. The treed hedgerow in the north is bordered by the exotic honeysuckle in full red fruit, which while not very nutritious, has been observed to serve as fodder for robins, catbirds and even one meadow mouse.

The pinewoods has been quiet. An occasional tufted titmouse, chickadee or nut-hatch could call. Earlier in the summer one could expect the call of the red-bellied woodpecker and the nesting wood peewee as well. Will have to wait to see what late summer and early fall bring us.

- Marty Borko

It's Time to Renew Your Membership

As a nonprofit we rely on members' support to help us present informative programs to the public, to provide beautiful outdoor trails and settings for nature lovers, and fun and educational opportunities for children, just to name a few things. Your membership makes all that possible, so take a minute to renew your annual membership. You can renew online or use the form on the back page. And thank you for supporting the Carantouan Greenway.

Friends of the Carantouan Greenway

Yes! Count me in! I believe in protecting farm and forestland, wildlife habitat and watersheds in the Penn-York Valley. I want to become a member of Carantouan Greenway!

- Mighty Oak \$500/year Trailblazer \$25/year
 Golden Eagle..... \$75/year Other \$ _____
 Stargazer \$50/year **Renewing member** **New member**
- I would like to receive the newsletter via email. Email address _____
 I prefer to receive the newsletter in the mail.
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E-mail Address _____

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Gifts to Carantouan Greenway are fully tax deductible! (Tax ID Number 23-2750872)

Please send all contributions to Carantouan Greenway, P.O. Box 441, Sayre, PA 18840-0441 or P.O. Box 827, Waverly, NY 14892-0827 or on-line at <http://carantouangreenway.org/becomeafriend.html>



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