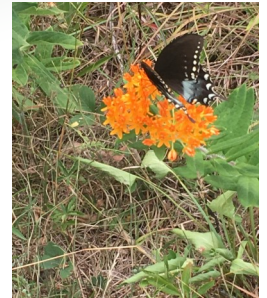




Friends of Memorial Lake and Swatara State Parks



Inside this Issue:

<i>Richard H. Light Memorial Bench</i>	2
<i>Animal Track Quiz</i>	2
<i>The Big Sit!</i>	3
<i>Species Spotlight</i>	4
<i>The Swatara Rail Trail (continued on page 6)</i>	5
<i>Volunteer Service</i>	7
<i>Upcoming Events</i>	8

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President's Message

A super, active summer is gone, and we look forward to a rewarding fall. Please check the OUR website and Facebook site for our fall activities calendar and connections to our numerous committees.

A special thanks goes out to our Board of Directors, the committee chair people, members, and the volunteers for their effort in maintaining the parks and conducting educational programs.

At a recent staffing of the parking area on the Bear Hole Trail in Swatara State Park, we spoke to 40 people going north and south on the Appalachian Scenic Trail. The trail runs 2,180 miles from Georgia to Maine. Many of the hikers stopped to chat and share stories while enjoying bottles of Gatorade and snacks supplied by a "Friends" member. There were people of all ages and backgrounds, including a professor from Hawaii, a retired FBI agent, and a hiking dog with trail booties. We later found they shared the generosity of the "Friends" group with other hikers and expressed their appreciation for their experience in Swatara State Park.

Periodically, we will be holding "meet the Friends days" at various locations in 2017. The time and place will be noted on our Facebook page. Our purpose is to share history, provide park information, answer questions, and meet our members. Our next outing will be on or about Memorial Day in 2017. Please join us.

Hunting Season



Just a reminder: Almost all of Swatara State Park is open to hunting everyday to include Sunday. Please consider wearing orange. Except for hunting dogs, all dogs must be on a leash. In addition, dog owners may want to protect their pets with an orange collar or vest. Hunters are reminded to share the park and look out for other visitors. Any feeding of animals in state parks is a violation of State Park and Game Commission Law. Tree stands must be placed and tagged in accordance with Game Commission Rules or they will be removed by law enforcement.

The Richard H. Light Memorial Bench



Our thanks to the many generous donors whose financial contributions funded the purchase of the bench and to the volunteers and Friends Group members who assembled and installed it. The bench is located at the intersection of Old State Road and Bear Hole Trail on the access ramp to the Waterville/Appalachian Trail Bridge. Stop by and sit awhile. Take a few minutes and reflect on Richard's invaluable contributions to the natural and historical resources of the park and surrounding area.

Can You Identify these Animals Tracks?

- 

1. _____
- 

2. _____
- 

3. _____
- 

4. _____
- 

5. _____
- 

6. _____
- 

7. _____

Answers on Page 6

The Big Sit!

October is when many birders look forward to the Big Sit! Fall bird migration is still going on and this provides a fun opportunity to see how your area stacks up to other areas around the world when it comes to finding birds.

The New Haven, Connecticut Bird Club started, what has now become an autumn tradition for many birders, in 1999 and the event is hosted by *Bird Watcher's Digest* with Swarovski Optik as the sponsor. It is a non-competitive event, although many birders will compare their observations to those of other birding groups. Teams from all over the world participate in this event. Those of us who live in Pennsylvania can be proud that we have had the largest number of teams participating in this event in the last few years.

The rules are fairly simple. A team of birders gets together to count whatever birds they see or hear in an area. There's just one small catch. Each team chooses a 17-foot diameter circle (real or imaginary) in a selected location. Then the team counts what it sees and hears from that circle. One team member may leave the circle to check out a bird that has been spotted from the circle to make certain of identification. There must be a member of the team in the circle at all times, and only the birds seen or heard from the circle may be counted.

The event is often called "tailgating for birders." Teams bring snacks and drinks (non-alcoholic) and settle in for a day of birding. Some teams do a 24 hour bird-a-thon. Others spend only a few hours.

The team for the Friends of Memorial Lake and Swatara State Parks will again participate this year. The event will be held on October 9, 2016 from approximately 5:30 AM until 8:30 PM. Our circle is located in the old Suedberg air-field which is a perfect location for birding since it encompasses a number of different habitats. So bring a chair, a pair of binoculars, bug spray, and some refreshments and join us for The Big Sit! You do not have to be there for the entire time. Come and go as you please. This is a perfect opportunity for you to see what birding is all about, and why it is one of the fastest growing hobbies in the country.

If you have any questions contact Dave McNaughton at 717-273-7341.



Species Spotlight:

In each issue, we'll try to highlight a species of interest for Swatara or Memorial State Park. These species may not be rare, but their life history, their appearance, or some other facet of their being inspires wonder.

The Marbled Salamanders of Swatara State Park

Marbled salamanders are Swatara State Park's largest salamander. Their coloration is striking, with an eggplant blue matrix highlighted with powder blue to grey horizontal lines that sometimes meet to form a ladder-like pattern. Marbleds arrive to breed at seasonal pools in the fall before the arrival of the wet weather that ushers in the last of the warm nights. By doing so, they gain a competitive advantage over other species that will arrive in the pools in the spring to lay eggs. Marbled eggs will be protected by their father, that moves on only after the rains fill the root tunnel or soil cavity and covers the eggs. Once that happens, larvae begin to hatch and eat before literally go to ground to stay moist in the soil and the water table. When spotted salamanders and wood frogs arrive in March, the marbled larvae already have a considerable size advantage over their other competitors and use it to devour the other species' eggs and larvae. Marbled parents, like other mole salamanders (a group that includes spotted and Jeffersons) are fossorial and hunt beneath rocks, logs, and debris but otherwise bury themselves during the daylight hours.



Photo by Patrick Coin https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marbled_salamander

Marbled salamanders are considered somewhat rare in Pennsylvania, not reaching threatened and endangered status, but not commonly found throughout the state either. They do not have a season and cannot be collected without a scientific permit from the Fish and Boat Commission. Throughout the Northeast, however, they are sometimes the most common species where their numbers make it more difficult for spotted salamanders (more common in Pennsylvania) to survive to adulthood and leave the pools.

If you're inclined to find a marbled salamander, take a photo and submit it to the state's atlas project, the Pennsylvania Amphibian and Reptile Survey (PARS) <http://www.paherpsurvey.org>. While the salamander occurs in many of the park's PARS blocks, only one has so far been documented. Remember to carry your fishing license, since all amphibian and reptile disturbance constitutes "land fishing" according to state code.

Winter is Coming (don't worry, we're not talking about Game of Thrones)

The Friends of Memorial Lake and Swatara State Parks hope you enjoyed visiting the parks this spring and summer. Although the weather was unusually warm into September, there are many signs of fall in the parks. We may not get a very colorful display of leaves due to this summer's drought, but there are still plenty of late blooming wildflowers which are providing a splash of color.



Although the Friends group does not plan events during the winter months, please visit the parks once winter arrives. There are plenty of birds to see once the leaves are off the trees, and other wildlife is also more visible when the vegetation begins to die back. The Bear Hole Trail and Swatara Rail Trail are great for walking or riding even in the colder months of the year.

If you enjoy the snow, Swatara State Park is a great place to visit. Why not give cross-country skiing or snow shoeing a try?

If those are not your cup of tea, then see if you can identify the tracks in the snow left by the animals that inhabit the parks. This is a wonderful activity to do with children.

So don't hibernate this winter, and join the Friends for new activities in the spring.

The Swatara Rail Trail

Swatara State Park's Swatara Rail Trail starts at Lickdale and runs north and east for roughly 10 miles to a point behind the Hampton Inn at the Pine Grove Interchange of I-81. The trail surface includes sections of crushed limestone, asphalt, and old railroad bed. Hiking, biking, and cross country skiing are permitted on the entire trail and horseback riding is permitted north of Sand Siding Bridge. The 576 foot bridge over the Swatara Creek is located midway along the rail trail and connects it to Bear Hole Trail, thereby forming two loops: one of about 7.2 miles to the east utilizing Swopes Valley Road and Sand Siding Trail; the other of about 4 ½ miles to the west and south utilizing the Waterville Bridge. By utilizing From State Park Lane, cyclists can access Swatara State Park's 10 miles of single track Mountain Bike Trails. These trails are considered difficult by DCNR standards and easy by IMBA standards. Trailheads with parking and informational kiosks are located along and near the trail. The eastern and southern sections of the trail are subject to road noise. There is a permanent restroom facility at the Trout Run Trailhead. Knowing a little about the rich history of the Swatara Valley will help you to better appreciate the trail.

As early as 2500 BC aboriginal people living within the current day boundaries of the Swatara State Park almost certainly used sections of what today is known as the Swatara Rail Trail.

The American Indians used the valley until the mid-1700s as a means of transportation and communication. Warrior trails ran along the north base of the Blue Mountain following the Swatara River (as it was called in those days) and current rail trail through Swatara Gap. During the French and Indian War, the Delaware Indians used sections of the Swatara Rail Trail to travel south through the Swatara Gap into the fertile farming community south of the Gap where they claimed the lives of about 150 farmers that lived in the southern part of the Park beyond the Swatara Gap. After the French and Indian War, most of the Delaware Indians left the area.

Early Swatara Valley settlers living in the northern section of the Park used the Swatara River as a means of commerce, floating rafts or arks of timber cut at local saw mills to their market in Jonestown. It is believed the settlers used the old Warrior Trails and current day rail trail when traveling on foot along the Swatara.

In 1830, despite controversy between the timber rafters and the Union Canal Company of Pennsylvania, the canal company opened its Branch Canal from Water Works to Pinegrove. In many places the Swatara Rail Trail follows the towpath of the old canal.

In 1862 a horrific flood destroyed the Branch Canal. Due to the introduction of the S&S Railroad and the lack of financial resources, the Branch Canal was abandoned after the flood. The remains of 7 of the 14 lift locks on the Branch Canal and other significant canal features can still be viewed from the Swatara Rail Trail today.

By 1866 most of the canal property in the Park had been purchased by the Philadelphia and Reading Railroad Company. The Pine Grove and Lebanon Railroad was incorporated on September 27, 1868 - the first railroad incorporated under Pennsylvania's general railroad law - to build south from Pine Grove to the Lebanon County line. The Lebanon and Pine Grove Railroad was incorporated at about the same time to build from the county line south to Lebanon where it met the Reading's Lebanon Valley Branch. The new line was built in 1870, and the first train ran between Lebanon and Pine Grove on March 7, 1870. The Pine Grove & Lebanon, Lebanon & Pine Grove, Good Spring and Lorberry Creek Railroads were consolidated to form the Lebanon and Tremont Railroad on March 25, 1871. On May 8, 1871, the Lebanon and Tremont was itself merged into the Philadelphia and Reading Railroad.

In 1898 the Rough Riders had just taken San Juan Hill and patriotism was running high. On November 16 the men of the Pine Grove Lodge, Patriotic Order, Sons of America, assisted by coal miners strung a huge 30 by 40 foot American Flag magnificently across the Swatara Gap over what is now the Swatara Rail Tail. The flag was hoisted with a 5/8th inch steel cable and anchored up the steep slope with eye-bolts set in concrete anchored in rock. The flag was strung by putting rings in the grommets, clipping the rings over the taut cable and pulling the flag back across the Gap with a long wire. The effort was a salute to the returning soldiers of Pine Grove's Company G, Fourth Regiment, Pennsylvania Militia, who traveled home by special train on the Lebanon to Tremont branch of the Reading Railroad through the Swatara Gap.

About 60 years after the advent of the railroad, a more sophisticated highway system was constructed. Slowly, motor vehicle transport took over much of the rail transport business. By 1965 the rail road in the northern section of the park had been abandoned and by the early 1980s the line from Suedberg south to Lebanon was abandoned. Today trucks using

Continued on Page 6

The Swatara Rail Trail (continued)

Interstate 81 carry most of the cargo that was once transported through the Park by rail. The rail road bed was abandoned and today that very rail road bed constructed between 1868 and 1870 forms the base for the Swatara Rail Trail.

Although not a major source of commerce, along the rail trail there was a thriving little airport that could and did accommodate aircraft as large the DC-3 and more commonly the smaller aircraft like the Piper J-3 Cub and helicopters.

So today when you travel on the Swatara Rail Tail, along with the quiet serenity; the cool lush forests; the sound of babbling brooks; the chattering birds; and all the sights and sounds of other wildlife, you can pause for a moment and appreciate the past. Imagine the fleeting image of an Indian warrior darting across the trail in front of you, the sound of a conch shell horn being blown by a canal boat captain signaling the lock tender to ready the lock for passage, or the sound of the distant steam engine rumbling along the track.



Answers to quiz

- | | | |
|------------|---|----------------------|
| 1. Raccoon | 4. Gray Squirrel | 7. White-tailed Deer |
| 2. Beaver | 5.. American Crow | |
| 3. Opossum | 6. Ruffed Grouse (bet you thought it was a turkey; tracks look similar but are smaller in size) | |

Volunteer Service

A big thank you to our growing group of dedicated, hardworking, enthusiastic volunteers working at Memorial Lake and Swatara State Parks. From March through August volunteers donated in excess of 2200 service hours. A rough summary of reported hours is shown below.

Bear Hole Trail	173.0 Hours	Memorial Lake General	170.0 Hours
Mifflin Trail	8.0 Hours	Swatara General Support	186.0 Hours
Moonshine Trail	29.0 Hours	Amphibian Walk	8.0 Hours
Portage Trail	4.5 Hours	Bird Walk	23.0 Hours
Round-About-Loop	1.0 Hours	Moth Night	21.5 Hours
State Park Lane	183.0 Hours	Driving Tour Attendant	210.0 Hours
Swatara Rail Trail	522.0 Hours	Chipper Maintenance	37.5 Hours
Trout Run Trail	30.0 Hours	Canal Lock Maintenance	64.0 Hours
Swatara Trailheads	55.0 Hours	Invasive Plant Control	28.0 Hours
Swatara Water Trail	44.0 Hours	Veterans Festival 2016	30.0 Hours
Swopes Valley Boat Launch	14.0 Hours	Friends Group Projects	36.0 Hours
Litter and Trash Cleanup	89.0 Hours	Animal Rescue	12.5 Hours
Kiosk Erection	21.0 Hours	Brochures and Info Papers	18.0 Hours
Table and Bench Construction	39.5 Hours	Volunteer Coordinator	29.0 Hours

This summer we were very fortunate to have volunteers from Milton Hershey School and Lebanon Valley College women's volleyball and men's and women's cross country track teams stop by Swatara State Park to perform volunteer community service. These high school and college students performed over 400 hours of trail maintenance, trailhead maintenance, picnic table construction, and litter pickup. Among other things, our regular weekday crew of retirees and one college student mowed Bear Hole Trail twice this summer with the park tractor and a 7 foot sickle bar mower on loan from a friends group member, cleared the debris pile obstructing navigation of the Swatara Creek at the Interstate 81 bridge, mulched the trees and rocks at Swopes Valley Trailhead, donated and installed a new vehicle access gate, cleared countless fallen trees and limbs, and as you can see above, spent many hours beating back the brush along the Swatara Rail Trail.

As always, I want to thank the full time staff for making it possible for our volunteers to contribute as much as they do. The Park Manager and staff govern the amount of volunteer service contributed to our park complex.

Article Submitted by Dave Ravegum, Volunteer Coordinator

Upcoming Events

October 8	9:00am to 1:00pm	Lock 5 Maintenance Meet at Swopes Valley Trailhead
October 9	5:30am to 8:30pm	Big Sit Swatara Valley Airport, Suedberg Area
October 22	9:00am to 1:00pm	Great American Cleanup Trout Run Trailhead
November 21	7:00pm to 9:00pm	Board Meeting, Vista Room, Community Club, FTIG

A Little Commonsense And Courtesy Go A Long Way

All trails in Swatara State Park have signage designating their approved usage. All approved trails in Swatara State Park are shown on park maps and have icons showing visitors how they may be used. Horses must stay on designated horse trails. They must also stay on the side of the trail closest to the Swatara Creek at all times. Horses are not permitted off trail in the creeks or streams. While horses have the right-of-way over other non-motorized users, riding two or three horses abreast and not allowing bikers to pass is not a polite or acceptable practice. As all horse trails in Swatara State Park are designated as multiuser, make sure your horse has the training and temperament for riding on congested trails. Bear Hole Trail, Sand Siding Trail, and the Swatara Rail Trail are multiuse stone trails. Please avoid galloping, trotting, and cantering as they damage the trails at a faster rate. Riders are required to clean up after their horses once they've dismounted to walk across the Sand Siding and Mill Creek Bridges. Also keep in mind that Swopes Valley Road is a township road on which motor vehicle traffic has the right-of-way. Riding two or three abreast along Swopes Valley Road is not only unwise, it is dangerous. Furthermore, horseback riders impeding vehicle traffic are in violation of the motor vehicle code (see sections 3103 and 3364).

Membership Information

The Board Members of the Friends of Memorial Lake and Swatara State Park (FMLSSP) would like to thank you for being members or for considering a membership. The FMLSSP is a federally tax exempt non-profit corporation comprised of unpaid, dedicated volunteers. The purpose for which the Friends Group has been organized is for the protection, preservation, conservation, enhancement, and the promotion of public awareness of recreational, natural, cultural, and historical resources of Memorial Lake and Swatara State Parks. Memberships from people like you help to support our mission and enable us to provide educational opportunities to people of all ages, and preserve our wildlife habitats that serve as a home for native plants and animals. **As a supporting member you are ensuring the continuation of our vital services!**

As we near the holiday season, please consider giving the Gift of Membership to the FMLSSP for your friends and loved ones and help to pass on your support of the Parks.

Remember to follow us on Facebook and check out our website www.swatara.org for upcoming events, volunteer opportunities, and park and trail information and advisories.

Membership applications may be downloaded from our Website:

www.swatara.org