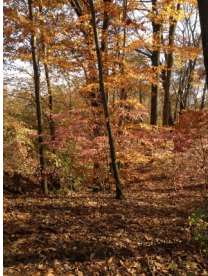




Friends of Memorial Lake and Swatara State Parks



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Newsletter Editor

Barbara Ritzheimer



The Big Sit!

The Big Sit! is an annual, international, noncompetitive birding event hosted by *Bird Watcher's Digest* and founded by the New Haven (Connecticut) Bird Club. Every team that observes the year's "Golden Bird" has a chance to win \$500. Every year, bird watchers from around the globe unite on this special day by participating in this free event, open to any person and club in any country! The Big Sit! is sponsored by Swarovski Optik.

The idea is to choose a location and draw a real or imaginary circle around that spot. Counters stay within the circle and record every bird seen or heard from the circle. One person is allowed to leave the circle to get a closer look at a bird that has been spotted from within the circle if there is any question about identification. That's why this event is often called "tailgating for birders." Participants settle in with snacks and drinks (non-alcoholic) for a day of birding. It can be a 24 hour event if the group chooses.



The Friends of Memorial Lake and Swatara State Parks have been participating in this bird-a-thon since 2013. Last year's highlights included an Osprey, Bald Eagle, Peregrine Falcon and more than 2000 American Robins. The event begins before sunrise and really gets underway with the dawn chorus of White-crowned and White-throated Sparrows.

This year's event will be held on October 11, 2015 and begin at 5:30 AM and end about 8:30 PM. Join us at the old Suedberg airfield to help us count. Come and go as you please. There is no requirement that you must be present the entire time. For more info contact Dave McNaughton at 717-273-7341.

dkmcnaughton@gmail.com

Memorial Lake and Swatara State Parks - 717 865-6470

MOTH NIGHT

National Moth Night is a chance to get out under the moonless night sky, set up a false moon, and watch as some of the most diverse creatures in our region come to you. The Night concept started in Britain, where moths are considered the best indicators of biodiversity in the landscape. The park has a couple hundred species on the list already, but every new location and every new night adds a few more.

We set up a line of white sheets and projected light onto them using a mercury vapor bulb, one of the brightest and most attractive lights available. Then we lined the base of the sheets with UV bulbs that can attract additional species. We hooked these all up to a quiet generator and waited. Within a half-hour of dusk we had our first species.

Led by local entomologist Mark Swartz, the Friends group took photos for the records and collected a few species that required close looks at anatomy for identification. We chose Wagner's Pond for this year's effort, and the location is perfect for accessibility as well as diversity. We will probably try the effort in this location again next year, but we'll move the date back to June to see what new species may be flying earlier in the year.

From <http://nationalmothweek.org/>

Why moths?

Moths are **among the most diverse and successful organisms** on earth.

Scientists estimate **there are 150,000 to more than 500,000 moth species.**

Their colors and patterns are either dazzling or so cryptic that they define camouflage. Shapes and sizes span the gamut from as small as a pinhead to as large as an adult's hand.

Most moths are nocturnal, and need to be sought at night to be seen —**others fly like butterflies during the day.**

Finding moths can be as simple as leaving a porch light on and checking it after dark. Serious moth aficionados use special lights and baits to attract them.

Left: The straight-lined *Argyria* (*Argyria critica*) shows some of the bright and interesting colors found on many of our local moths. Right: Two Hebrew moths show differences in patterns between individuals.



ATTENTION: SWATARA STATE PARK P.E.C. HORSE TRAIL RIDERS

DO YOU RIDE THE “DESIGNATED” P.E.C. HORSE TRAILS AT SWATARA STATE PARK? IF SO, WE NEED YOUR HELP.

We hope you are enjoying the trails with your horse. It has been three years since the volunteers have finished the roughly 4 miles of P.E.C. trails, and they were approved by the DCNR Trail Coordinator.

But, as time goes by, trees and brush continue to grow and the need for more maintenance is required. The trails need to be trimmed on each side, and the canopy from above is closing in and needs to be trimmed again.

I would like to ask you for your help. Can you volunteer 4 hours of your time every other weekend for maybe a month? We normally meet at 9:00 a.m. on a parking lot close to where we will be working. The temperatures in the hot summer months are not conducive for working. We usually do maintenance in the fall when the temperatures are somewhere in the sixty degree range. It's easier on us older volunteers.

Basically all you will need is a small hand saw, loppers or pruners, to trim back the growth. The heavier things will be cut with a chain saw. My husband and I try to keep the path mowed on each side of the trail together with the parking lot on Rte. 443.

This is a very nice trail, and we need to keep it well groomed. Soooooo!!! – If you can Help, please E-mail or call me. When I get 6 to 8 replies, I will schedule a date to do the work and hopefully you can join us. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you all for volunteering to help and keep the Swatara Park P.E.C Horse Trails in good condition.

If we don't step up to the plate and help with periodic maintenance, the P.E.C trails may be closed to all horses. I don't think any of us want to see that happen.

REMEMBER this section of the equestrian trail is kept in good condition by volunteers only! Will you become one?

To volunteer contact:

Edith Ryan

Swatara State Park P.E.C Horse Trail Coordinator

edithryan@verizon.net

717 919-2467 cell



CAUTION



Just a reminder: Hunting season has started. Please be aware that almost all of Swatara State Park is open to hunting. To be safe, wear orange if you are using the trails from Monday through Saturday. Hunting is not allowed on Sundays. You might also consider putting an orange collar or vest on your dog if you walk in the park with your pet.

Upcoming Events

October 11	5:30 am-9:00 pm	Big Sit Meet at Suedberg Swatara Valley Airport Contact Dave McNaughton 717-273-7341
October 17	9:00 am-1:00 pm	Trail Maintenance Meet at 1st Parking Lot on State Park Lane Pre-registration Required Contact: Dave Ravegum ravegumd@comcast.net
October 17	7:00 pm- ?	Astronomy Night Join us for an evening of sky watching. Bring a chair and a pair of binoculars. A night sky app or star map is also helpful. Meet at Trout Run Trailhead Contact: Dave McNaughton 717-273-7341

Don't let the approaching cold weather keep you homebound. You can get out and enjoy Memorial Lake and Swatara State Parks during the winter. Birding is still very good, even during winter. If there is enough snow, the trails in Swatara State Park are excellent for cross country skiing and snowshoeing. Walking the trails can be quite rewarding since wildlife viewing is easier in the winter. Try to identify all the animal tracks you see in the snow. Don't hibernate this winter! Come out and enjoy winter in the parks.

Did you know that the Beaver is North America's largest rodent? It can weigh as much as 60 pounds.



Local Volunteer Receives Prestigious PA DCNR Award

BREAKING NEWS—An awards ceremony was held on October 14th, at Memorial Lake State Park Headquarters to honor a local DCNR Conservation Volunteer and Charter Member of the Friends of Memorial Lake and Swatara State Parks. At that ceremony, our own Shirley Halk received the most prestigious and coveted PA DCNR ***Cavity-Nesting Trails Monitor of the Year Award***.

Shirley has been a highly dedicated and competent volunteer at Memorial Lake and Swatara State parks for over 27 years. She has played an essential role in maintaining and increasing the Eastern Blue Bird population in our parks as well as the surrounding Fort Indiantown Gap area. Year after year she faithfully and diligently monitors over 100 bluebird boxes and maintains bluebird and bat counts for the parks and more than 200 boxes locally.

In the spring and fall of each year, she repairs, replaces, cleans, and erects new boxes. During the nesting season, she regularly visits each nesting box, records the number of active nests, the number of eggs produced, and birds fledged along the trail. She also monitors the growth of the fledglings. At the end of each nesting season she provides a detailed nesting report to the park manager.



From Left to Right: DCNR Natural Resource Program Specialist, Carly Hitzfeld; Shirley Halk; Memorial Lake and Swatara State Parks Manager, Corey Snyder



Shirley is not only a highly skilled, reliable, and dedicated Bluebird Trail Monitor, she is also a Penn State Master Gardener and Plant Diagnostician who worked in green industry for 15 years designing gardens. She is highly regarded for her ability to identify native plants and invasives. Over the years she has participated in the inventory of PA reptiles and amphibians for IUP, taught children's nature classes, was an active bee keeper and is a member of CABA.

The presentation was originally scheduled to be made at DCNR's Annual Cavity-Nesting Monitors Meeting at French Creek State Park. Due to budget constraints the meeting at French Creek had to be canceled.

Once again, special thanks to Shirley for her 27 years of hard work, dedication, and enthusiasm while volunteering to monitor, protect, and propagate Eastern Bluebirds and other cavity-nesters in both of our parks.

Volunteer Service

We are truly fortunate to have a group of dedicated, hardworking, enthusiastic volunteers working at Memorial Lake and Swatara State Parks. Over the summer months volunteers were very busy. Friends Group members and DCNR Conservation Volunteers reported over 575 hours of volunteer services. P.E.C. volunteers, the Blue Bird Trail Monitors, and SAMBA members also completed hundreds of unreported* hours of hard work maintaining their trails. A brief summary of reported hours is shown below.

Mifflin Trail Maintenance	14.0 Hours	Moth Night	32.0 Hours
State Park Lane	95.0 Hours	Swatara General Support	125.0 Hours
Tow Path Trail	18.0 Hours	Driving Tour Attendant	106.0 Hours
Trail Surface Smoothing	10.0 Hours	Chipper Maintenance	3.0 Hours
Swatara Water Trail	31.5 Hours	Canal Lock Maintenance	34.5 Hours
Invasive Plant Control	22.0 Hours	Fossil Site Tours	8.0 Hours
Picnic Table Construction	22.0 Hours	General GPS Services	14.0 Hours
Bench Mark Recovery	59.0 Hours	Veterans Festival 2016	32.0 Hours

**These groups report annually.*

In the past year we have had over 100 volunteers that have individually contributed anywhere from 2 hours to 500 hours of service. All the work performed by volunteers from school students to seniors in their mid to late seventies is greatly appreciated. Our volunteers will tell you that hardly a volunteer working day goes by that they aren't thanked for their efforts by the park staff and by park visitors. In any given year, our park complex may not have record numbers of volunteers as compared to larger and older state parks; however, the quality of service has been recognized by the Department. In 2012 one of our Friends Group members was selected by the Department as the PA DCNR Conservation Volunteer of the Year. In 2014, Shirley Halk, a charter member of the Friends Group, received a letter of appreciation for 26 years of Service to the Cavity-Nesting Trail Program at Memorial Lake and Swatara State Parks. This year, Shirley was selected by the Department to be the PA DCNR Cavity-Nesting Monitor of the Year. I want to take this opportunity to thank each and every volunteer working at our parks for making a difference and for making my role as volunteer coordinator so enjoyable and rewarding. Finally, I want to thank the full time staff for making it possible for our volunteers to contribute as much as they do. A volunteer is only as good as the Park Manager and staff enable them to be.

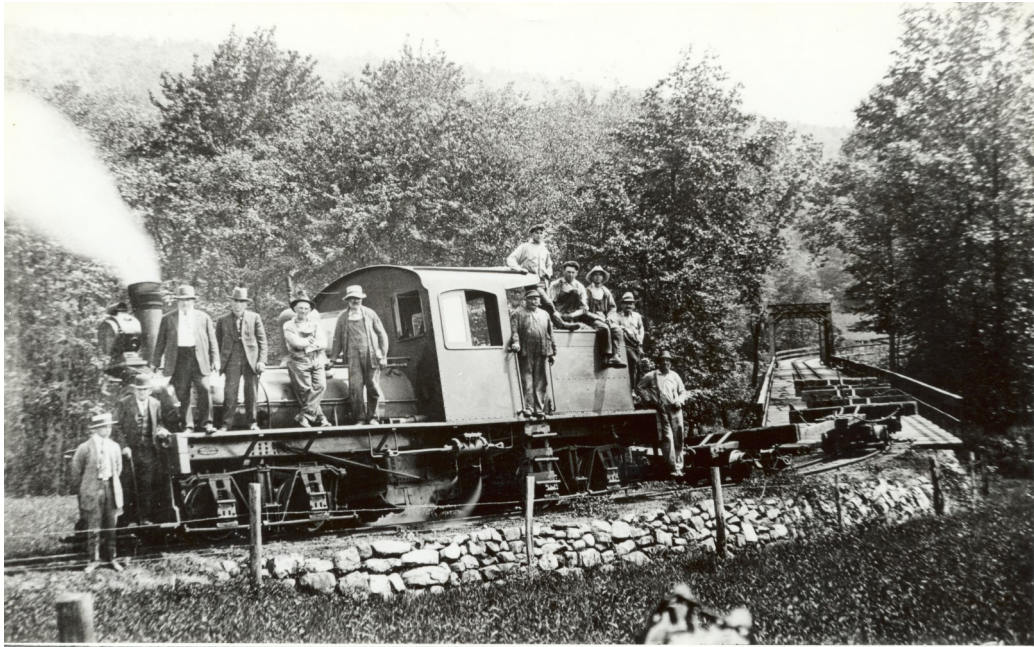
Article Submitted by Dave Ravegum

TWO NEW METAL ACCESS GATES FOR SWATARA STATE PARK

THANKS TO THE GENEROSITY OF A LOCAL CONTRACTOR, SWATARA STATE PARK WILL BE GETTING TWO USED, SERVICEABLE, HEAVY DUTY METAL GATES. THE GATES WILL BE USED TO PREVENT UNAUTHORIZED VEHICLE TRAFFIC FROM ENTERING THE PARK WHILE PROVIDING ACCESS FOR EMERGENCY, UTILITY, AND MAINTENANCE VEHICLES. THE GATES ARE CURRENTLY UNDERGOING MINOR REPAIRS AND MODIFICATIONS AND SHOULD BE READY FOR INSTALLATION BY THE END OF THE MONTH.

A Blast to the Past

Can you identify the pictures shown below? Both are part of the railroad history of Swatara State Park.



A Clue: Photos courtesy of Brenda Steckley and Francis Ditzler.



Friends of Memorial Lake and Swatara State Parks
18 Boundary Road
Grantville, Pa 17028

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION – 2015

☐ New Member

☐ Renewal

Date: _____

Membership Class: ☐ Individual - \$10.00 per year ☐ Family - \$15.00 per year

Donation Only: _____

Last Name: _____ First Name: _____

Spouse's Name, if family membership: _____

Street Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Home Phone: (____) _____ Cell Phone: (____) _____

Email Address: _____

Please indicate if you are interested in being a member of any of the following committees:

- ☐ Trail – Maintain existing trails and design and construct new trails.
- ☐ Natural Resources – Explore, identify, and protect park natural resources and provide educational opportunities and experiences for park visitors.
- ☐ Historical/Cultural – Identify, document, and help preserve historical/cultural resources and provide interpretive tours for park visitors.
- ☐ Communications – Prepare internal and external communications
- ☐ Fund Raising – Plan and conduct fund raising activities.
- ☐ Membership – Promote membership and maintain membership registry.

Please list below your areas of interest and any special skills or experience that you have and are willing to share.

Make checks payable to “Friends of Memorial Lake and Swatara State Parks” or “FMLSSP”.
Please send completed application and check to address shown on the top of this application.

Friends of Memorial Lake and Swatara State Parks (FMLSSP) is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt, nonprofit corporation. Contributions to FMLSSP are tax deductible. The official registration of the FMLSSP may be obtained from the PA Department of State by calling toll free within PA 1-800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement. Memberships are valid on a calendar-year basis.