

# Gov. Dick Environmental Center



## The Natural Observer

Mt. Gretna, PA

Winter 2017 - 2018

*A peaceful sunrise....*



Photo by Diana Sprucebank

*...on a snowy fall morn.*

*Happy Winter to All!*

Colder temperatures and snow on the ground shouldn't keep anyone indoors. The threat of ticks is lessened, gnats and no-see-ums aren't flying in your eyes and ears, and it's a beautiful forest out there!

Take a walk to see how many evergreen plants you can find. Christmas fern and evergreen wood fern, American holly and mountain laurel, partridgeberry and trailing arbutus are just a few. Stop to admire the various mosses adorning trees, rocks, and the ground throughout the forest and learn to name them.

Now is a good time to take up bird watching. There are fewer of them to learn to identify, and if you

become very familiar with each winter resident, you'll quickly spot a new bird when it shows up. Almost everyone knows the petite chickadee. When you see or hear one of them, look all around. Other birds will flock with chickadees in winter. It's their way of sharing food resources and keeping watch for danger – the more eyes, the better!

After a snow, put your boots on and do a little tracking. Most of the time we don't get to see the animals that live here, but a snowfall writes their stories of searching for food, watching for predators, resting, and more. You might see the tracks of coyote, opossum, raccoon, weasel, squirrel, rabbit, fox, crow, turkey, or deer.

Enjoy your winter explorations! Send us a photo of what you find or what beauty you see that catches your eye.

**Can you name** three endangered mammal species in Pennsylvania? See the last page for the answer.



### Thursday Evening Hours

The Park's Board of Directors has approved access to the trails on Thursday evenings **ONLY**. Hikers, bikers, and climbers may use the trail system after dark but must have parking lots vacated at 9 p.m. Please respect trail rules and the properties of our neighbors. This is in effect to and including March 15, 2018.

## 7th Annual Bouldering Competition



photo by Lee Wells

The 7th annual Bouldering Competition held in November brought over 200 people of all ages and skill levels to the rocks. Adam Hartman is the coordinator of the event, and he knows how to make every detail run smoothly. Thank you, Adam! A great time was had by all. Thank you to the many volunteers that made this year's climbing event a success.

The *Governor Dick Bouldering Guidebook* will be available for purchase at the Environmental Center when we reopen in spring. The cost is \$30.

***Don't forget!!!!*** The New Year's Day Hike 'n' Kraut is scheduled for January 1 at 11:00 a.m. After the hike is a pork and sauerkraut lunch. The cost is \$3 per person OR bring a dish to share.



**The Environmental Center is closed** (except for special programs) until the first weekend in March, 2018.

## Flint Knapping Demonstration

According to [www.flintknappingtools.com](http://www.flintknappingtools.com) flint knapping is the "process of chipping away material from high silica stones like 'flint' in a carefully controlled manner...to produce sharp projectile points and tools."

In October Michael Whorley, Jr. of Lebanon demonstrated his skill in taking a shapeless rock and working it into an arrowhead one chip at a time.



He worked outdoors under a canopy and shared his knowledge as he worked. He is an avid collector of American Indian arrowheads and stone tools, spending hours walking plowed fields and other areas where the soil has been exposed. Stop by the Center in spring to see examples of his work on display. We hope to have Mike return to do another demonstration in 2018.





## Thank you, Boy Scouts!



This fall saw the completion of three Eagle Scout projects, all excellent improvements to what the park has to offer. Thank you, Scouts, for leaving a lasting and great mark on the park!

Benjamin Ferrari of Newmanstown added two new benches to the Fire Road Trail to the Tower and he repaired and repainted every bench at the Tower.

James Regensburger of Lititz made improvements to the hill section of trail 4. He created a dozen grade dips to help control erosion, trimmed brush along the sides of the trail, and placed a bench at the intersection of trails 4 and 15.

Austin Kreiser of Elizabethtown made concrete pads for the entrance and exit areas of the Tower that were becoming mud puddles. Warburton Nursery of Elizabethtown donated plants that Austin placed in beds on either side of the Tower.

Thank you again, Boy Scouts, for your planning and work.

Answer: Three endangered mammals in Pennsylvania: Delmarva Fox Squirrel, Indiana Bat, and the Least Shrew.

### Ways you can contact us:

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## What flower is this?



This is witch-hazel, *Hamamelis virginiana*. Unlike so many other flowering plants, witch-hazel blooms in October and November. The petals are narrow and four in number, and there are unripe fruits on the shrub at the same time it flowers. We can depend on finding witch-hazel flowering in November, but what about hepatica?



*Anemone americana* or round-lobed hepatica is an early spring bloomer with an average flowering time of April 11. November 29 this year was rather mild and several hepatica plants sent forth blossoms, taking advantage of the full sun reaching the forest floor once again since the leaves have fallen from the trees.

See! You never know what surprises await you at Governor Dick Park. Come be surprised!