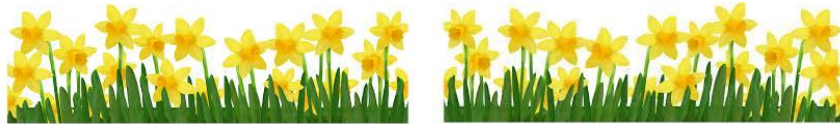


The Natural Observer

The News of Governor Dick Park

SPRING! 2017



Wandering & Pondering Milkweed

While I was out for a hike a few weeks ago, I wandered through the meadow up by the tower. The majority of people think that it is most picturesque only during blooming time. However, I am a firm believer that when you are a true lover of nature, you will find and appreciate beauty everywhere.




This milkweed pod had called me over – it must have seen I had my camera and wanted its picture taken so I obliged.

This magnificent specimen reminded me how incredible nature is. *“Insects pollinate milkweed. Each flower has little slits in the sides, and when an insect lands to drink the nectar, sometimes a foot gets stuck. As it tries to yank away, the claws get caught on wee wire-like filaments that have a tiny saddlebag of pollen on each end. If the insect is able to get free, it brings this bundle along to the next flower.”*

In a study conducted years ago it was found that the three insect groups most important to pollinating milkweed flowers were bees, wasps and butterflies. The most important families of bees were the honey bees and bumble bees. Paper wasps and swallowtail and brush-footed butterflies were also important pollinators. Fortunately for us, our meadow is usually ‘all ah-buzz’ during the late summer, with busy bees and butterflies doing their part to ensure the plants will have future generations, so they themselves will have a future generation. How wise Nature is...

Take some time this summer to ponder a milkweed plant. You may find it to have about eight flower clusters, with seventy-five blossoms to each cluster. Only one flower from each umbel goes on to become a pod; the others will degenerate and fall. Inspect the seed filaments if you can. Imagine being so light and silky that you can just drift through the air wherever the breeze takes you.

Here are some parting words from Albert Einstein, “Look deep into nature, and then you will understand everything better.” See you outside this spring!  Diana

Hummingbirds often use the floss from milkweed seed pods to line their nests.



Governor Dick Environmental Center

HOMESCHOOL FIELD DAY TREE-MENDOUS TREES!

Calling all homeschool families! On May 3 from 10:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. there will be an opportunity to break from routine and spend a day in the woods. We'll celebrate the forest as we learn to identify trees and appreciate their beauty. There will be activities in science, art, and writing as we look closely at nature's wonders and delve into the mysteries of the forest. The cost is \$10 per child, siblings age 6 and up \$5, and siblings ages 3 to 5 \$2.50. Bring a lunch and dress for the weather and hiking. Registration forms are available at the office or through e-mail and are due by April 26.

KIDS TODAY...

... per day spend 5 hours watching TV or movies; ½ an hour talking on the cell phone and 1 ½ texting; 2 ½ hours listening to music; 3 hours on the internet or using video games; and 38 minutes reading. ABC News mentioned to a group of kids that years ago kids played with sticks, pretending it was a horse, a slingshot, a soldier's rifle or anything else they could dream up. Any takers? One boy's response, "Maybe if it was a virtual stick." Get your kids outside!

WE VOLUNTEERS!



Our faithful volunteers tackle a variety of chores that help keep Governor Dick Park beautiful. Mike Whorley is a behind-the-scenes volunteer. He is the proprietor of Whorley's All-Season Equipment Repair on Mt. Wilson Road, Lebanon. Mike came to us and offered his sharpening services to keep our mower blades and chainsaws sharp at no cost to the park. He said this is his way of giving back to a place that he enjoys very much.

Thank you, Mike, for all you do!

Spring Ephemerals

Can you define the word "ephemeral"? It means "lasting only a short time." There are quite a few wildflowers defined as spring ephemerals that are worth laying aside a busy schedule for. They flower on the forest floor in early spring before the leaves burst out on the trees, taking advantage of the full sunlight warming them. Round-lobed hepatica is one of them. In the warm days of early March this year a plant on the Interpretive Trail had flower buds, fooled like the rest of us into thinking winter was over.



One of the wonderful things about spring ephemerals is that they bloom en masse, creating a riot of delicate blooms. Spring beauty, bloodroot, and rue anemone are common here and flower by the thousands.



Trout lily, toothwort, wild ginger, blue cohosh, dutchman's breeches, squirrel corn, and wild bleeding heart are a few more examples of spring ephemerals.



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Hands On Nature!

Don't forget to register for the April 6 start of another 9-week session of our nature immersion program for children ages 2 to 5. The cost is \$75 for the 9-week session, and a sibling may attend for a reduced rate of \$60. We will meet Thursdays from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. Snacks will be provided. The class is limited to 10 children. If you are interested, call the office or send an e-mail. We will get a registration form to you.

Hike to Health

Saturday, June 17 at 9 a.m. in partnership with WellSpan Good Samaritan Hospital in Lebanon we'll launch a new program focusing on the connection between good health and the outdoors. You can come for the full event or pick one program. We'll have introductory classes in geocaching and bouldering, yoga and edible plants. There'll be an opportunity to have your blood pressure checked and to see a healthy grilling demonstration. And there'll be more! The rain date is June 24. More details will be available later in spring so stay tuned!

Dog Owners: It is the law that you keep your dog leashed while hiking at Governor Dick. Please be considerate of others and clean up after your dog, not just bagging his poop but bringing it back with you to throw away.



Things to Do

Programs are free unless stated otherwise. Meet at the Environmental Center on Pinch Rd.

Registration is required: call 964-3808 or e-mail governordick@hotmail.com.

March 25, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. – Boating Safety Course.

March 25, 1 p.m. – Backyard Biologists. For children ages 6 to 10 but younger children may also attend. \$5 per child.

March 26, 1:30 p.m. – Senior Walkabout – 2 to 4 miles for hikers over the age of 50.

April 2, 9 a.m. – Fitness Hike.

April 2, 1 to 4 p.m. – Music by the Fireplace.

April 6, 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. – Hands On Nature. This is the first class and you must be registered.

April 8, 9 to 11 a.m. – 2nd Saturday Volunteer Work Day.

April 9, 10 a.m. – Orienteering Event sponsored by the Delaware Valley Orienteering Association. Beginner's Class at 11 a.m.

April 12, 10:30 a.m. – Wednesday Wings & Things. A nature-snooping walk.

April 15, 10 a.m. – Spring Ephemerals flower walk.

The Center is CLOSED EASTER SUNDAY.

April 20, 7:15 p.m. – Monthly Board Meeting.

April 21, 10 a.m. – Toddlers in Tow. For children ages 2 to 5.

April 22, 10 a.m. – Spring Ephemerals flower walk.

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April 22, 1 p.m. – Backyard Biologists. Nature investigations for children ages 6 to 10. \$5.

April 23, 2 p.m. – Spring Ephemerals flower walk.

April 26, 10:30 a.m. – Wednesday Wings & Things nature-snooping walk.

April 29, 8 a.m. – Early Bird Walk. Bring binoculars.

April 29, 10 a.m. – 1 p.m. – Introduction to Bouldering Class. All ages welcome. Rain date April 30.

April 30, 1:30 p.m. – Senior Walkabout – 2 to 4 miles for hikers over the age of 50.

May 3, 10 a.m. – 2:30 p.m. – Homeschool Field Day: Tree-mendous Trees! Must register. Fee.

May 7, 9 a.m. – Fitness Hike.

May 7, 1 to 4 p.m. – Music on the Porch.

May 10, 10:30 a.m. – Wednesday Wings & Things.

May 11, 7:15 p.m. – Monthly Board Meeting.

May 13, 9 -11 a.m. – 2nd Saturday Volunteer Work Day.

May 13, 1 p.m. – Feathers and Flora Hike.

May 14, 2 p.m. – Mother's Day Bouquet Wildflower Walk. No picking permitted!

May 17, 10:30 a.m. – Wednesday Wings & Things.

May 19, 10 a.m. – Toddlers in Tow.

May 27, 1 p.m. – Backyard Biologists for children ages 6 to 10. \$5.

May 28, 1:30 p.m. – Senior Walkabout.

June 4, 8 a.m. – Fitness Hike.

June 4, 1 to 4 p.m. – Music on the Porch.

June 10, 9 to 11 a.m. – 2nd Saturday Volunteer Work Day.

June 14, 10:30 a.m. – Wednesday Wings & Things.

June 16, 10 a.m. – Toddlers in Tow.

June 17, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. – Hike to Health. Rain date June 24.

Calendar subject to change. Check our website for up-to-the-minute information.



The Eastern Phoebe

The eastern phoebe is unusual in that, unlike most birds, they often reuse nests in subsequent years. Occasionally they will refurbish old robin nests. Every year at the Environmental Center a phoebe raises a family or two. For the past two years she has nested on top of a bird house on the porch (they aren't cavity nesters). We had to throw away her old nest as she used a lot of thread and a couple nestlings lost their lives by getting tangled in it. We'll see if she picks the same spot this year. Phoebes are expected to arrive any day now from their wintering places in the southern U.S.

To contact us:

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