

WWIA News

Winter 2020



President's Message and Report

By John Hilewick, WWIA President

A new decade for WWIA has started! The board of directors met on January 16, 2020. Items of both old and new business were discussed and acted on. We had a quorum, although some voting directors and associate directors were vacationing in warmer environs and others were unable to make the meeting.

The treasurer's report was approved. As of January 16, the checkbook held \$3,928.40 and paid membership stood at 58. RR&K accounting firm will again file our 501(c)(3) form 990EZ with the IRS. I will file the PA Department of State, Bureau of Corporations and Charitable Organizations form to retain our designation as a nonprofit (nonstock) corporation in Pennsylvania and to protect our name identity.

The board agreed to enhance our website by archiving all past issues of the newsletter for which we have either hard copies or e-copies. In an effort to increase transparency, the bylaws will be added under the About WWIA tab.

A new supply of WWIA business cards will be ordered, with increased white space for member contact

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President's Message (cont.)

information. Tony and John will work with Mark Jackson of the Westmoreland Conservation District to make minor changes to the WWIA trifold brochure.

The president's proposed 2020 operating annual plan was approved without alterations or amendments.

We will again participate in the annual Walk in Penn's Woods in collaboration with the Westmoreland Land Trust. We are searching for an additional site that could accommodate physically challenged people and parents with strollers.

The board agreed that WWIA will pay for the \$45 dinner ticket of a volunteer who accompanies the WWIA representative to the annual PA Forestry Association Conservation Banquet, with its \$10,000 draw-down raffle. WWIA gets one free \$100 ticket

each year. A member must be in attendance to win the raffle.

This is the time of year that the Center for Private Forest and the Pennsylvania Forest Stewardship Program seek nominations for the class of 2020. Over four days in September, students will learn a great deal through hands-on training about how to care for their forests and how to share their new expertise with their neighbors. The training site will be Camp Krislund in Madisonburg (Centre County).

For more information, google PA Forest Stewardship Program for a wealth of information about the subject. If you're interested, contact one of the many WWIA members who are PaFSers, including me, and we can nominate you for the training. The deadline for nominations is March 15.

Recap of October Program on Easements and Rights of Way in Our Forests

By John Hilewick, WWIA President

This recap of the October program is brief. For more in-depth coverage, we've posted the PowerPoint presentation and audio at westmorelandwoodlands.org. If you can't access it, contact me at jandd.hilewick@gmail.com or call me at 724-925-1667, and I'll send you a hard copy for the cost of printing and postage.

Fair Shake Environmental Legal Services works to provide communities with the tools they need to defend their environments. In 2019, Fair Shake

provided more than 4,500 hours of free legal work to organizations and individuals in the Appalachian Basin. Ryan Hamilton, the supervising attorney in Fair Shakes' Pittsburgh office, gave a talk to WWIA about easements and rights of way in our forests. Josh Eisenfeld, the marketing director, ended the talk with information about Fair Shake and its cases.

First, Ryan explained that an *easement* allows someone other than the owner to use private property. A *right of way* allows a third party to pass

through but not use land owned by another.

He summarized legal principals and concepts, identified easement terminology, and described two types of easements. Next he explained the four ways an easement can be created.

Ryan also discussed several historic court decisions and early law on easements. He provided definitions of conservation easements and easements in gross by express grant. He answered questions about how to find out if there is an easement on your property.

Other concepts he covered involved how to treat existing easements, how to enforce and defend against easements, and what to keep in mind when creating new easements.

Then he moved on to right-of-way management practices. This part of the talk covered eminent domain and its many iterations (including natural gas pipelines).

Ryan discussed how to terminate easements. Finally, he advised landowners to determine their next steps based on what they want their forest to look like in 50 years.

The program was very well prepared, well presented, and comprehensive. At the end, Josh asked of us the following; 1) Donate to our outreach, 2) donate to our cases, 3) volunteer, and 4) share our story. Much of their work is performed pro bono. The board decided to make a \$100 donation to Fair Shake in gratitude for the presentation and the good work the group is doing to protect Pennsylvania forests.

The talk capped off a delicious potluck dinner at which attendees shared stories about their woodland experiences, as well as a brief but productive annual meeting .



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Recap of January WWIA Program: Livengood Brothers Count Raptors on Chestnut Ridge

By Judith Gallagher

On January 9, WWIA members and friends were treated to a talk by two young conservationists who have created their own fascinating research project.

Calvin and Peter Livengood live in Stewart Township near Ohiopyle. Four years ago, at the ages of 17 and 14, they visited the Allegheny Front Hawk Watch on the border of Somerset and Bedford counties, near Schellsburg.

That day they got to experience a thrill: Hundreds of raptors (birds of prey) streamed over their heads on their fall migration to Central and South America.

Why Chestnut Ridge

The brothers wanted that experience again and decided to recreate it closer to home. They suspected that Chestnut Ridge, the 90-mile long, farthest west ridge of the Allegheny Mountains, would also provide the conditions to attract birds of prey in flight. Both ridges have a wide expansive vantage point, a bright warm sun, heated mountain slopes, and columns of rising warm air.

"One reason birds fly on ridges is to save energy," Peter explained. "Wind strikes the ridge, gets deflected up by the slope, and gives them extra lift. They get a free ride."

Once one bird finds a thermal and begins to ride the warm air, others join. A column of wheeling birds rises above the ridge in a migration formation called a kettle.

At the WWIA meeting, Calvin and Peter talked enthusiastically about their experiences in the field and the results of their research. "Raptor migration is the greatest spectacle in nature," Peter said. "There was no record of anyone attempting a hawk watch on Chestnut Ridge, so we thought, 'Who better to do it than us?'"

In the spring of 2018, the Livengood brothers confirmed that raptors fly on Chestnut Ridge during both spring and fall migrations. For four migration seasons, they have collected environmental data (wind speed, wind direction, cloud cover, etc.). They use statistical modeling to determine the effects of environmental variables on the number of raptors migrating on Chestnut Ridge in a given day.

Calvin, 21, and Peter, 18, are now both Eagle Scouts and undergrads at California University of Pennsylvania. They still love nothing more than a clear, crisp day on the summit of Chestnut Ridge, counting migrating raptors.

The brothers partnered with Cal U's Center for Undergraduate Research, which funded high-powered binoculars and a spotting scope. "High-quality optics are essential to hawkwatching," Calvin said. Among the things they look for to identify migratory species are body shapes and wing proportions.

Calvin is now a junior juggling three majors: environmental science, business management, and fisheries and wildlife biology. He received further assistance through the university's Jesse B. Guttman Student Research Grant Program and the Dr. Barry Hunter Memorial Fund.

***“They’ve
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Peter is now a freshman majoring in fisheries and wildlife biology and jurisprudence. He earned the Boy Scouts’ William T. Hornaday Silver Medal for the raptor watch and three other conservation projects.

Dr. Carol Bocetti, a professor in the university’s Department of Biological and Environmental Sciences, is the brothers’ advisor on the project.

The brothers conduct research at the Summit Mountain Hawkwatch. They call it that to distinguish it from the many other Chestnut Ridges in the Appalachian Mountains, some of which were already hawkwatch sites.

The site data are compiled in the world’s largest database of raptor counts, HawkCount.org. For more information and the latest count data, visit <https://www.hawkcount.org/siteinfo.php?rsite=802> Calvin, who does the statistical number-crunching, walked the audience through the reams of data they’ve collected since spring 2018. “We usually watch from 9:00 or 10:00 a.m. until about 4:00

p.m.,” he explained. “In September we might count for ten hours a day but in November only six because an hour or two before sunset the thermals lessen and the raptors roost.”

With just two people counting two days a week, they’ve observed nearly 2,300 raptors in about 400 hours over four migration seasons. With some volunteer help, they documented 823 birds of prey over eight days last September.

The Livengoods have spotted more than a dozen species of raptors at those three sites. The species they see most often are broad-winged hawks, turkey vultures, red-tailed hawks, sharp-shinned hawks, and ospreys. Fourteen species of raptors can commonly be seen migrating in the eastern United States.

“At Point Lookout in September, we’ve seen 100 broad-winged hawks fly over at one time,” Peter said.

Why Hawkwatching

Peter said hawkwatching is the best way to track population trends. Many raptor species have remote nesting sites in Canada. “The more sites you have in Pennsylvania, and the more years of data, the better you understand raptor populations,” he said.

Why are raptors so important? They’re apex predators, Peter explained, meaning they are at the top of the food chain. Apex predators play an important role in balancing the ecosystem.

In a lively Q&A session after their PowerPoint, the brothers showed both their hands-on and book knowledge about the raptors they love. Peter said, “We want to show people why raptors are important and help them appreciate the miracle of migration. We want to see birds of prey conserved for future generations.”

Each spring and fall, from March through May and September through November, the brothers watch atop the Summit. They use three observation sites: Point Lookout on Route 40, the Summit Inn Golf Course (by permission), and a gas-well site near Laurel Caverns (by permission).

Calvin and Peter welcome the help of local volunteers to scan the skies. If you’re interested in volunteering, you too can feel the drama of watching these majestic birds. Email Peter at LIV0452@calu.edu if you’d like to volunteer.

Species Spotlight: Eastern Hemlock

By Celine Colbert, Service Forester

Hemlocks can be distinguished from other evergreens by their flat two-ranked needles, which are individually attached to the twig. They also have the smallest cone of our native evergreens. It measures only one-half to one inch long. Despite the small cone, the hemlock can grow into a mighty tree measuring more than 100 feet and living for up to 1,000 years!

Hemlocks are widely spread throughout Pennsylvania. They prefer cool, moist sites but sometimes occur on north-facing rocky outcrops.

Historically, hemlocks were harvested profusely for their tannin-rich bark, which was used to tan animal hides to make leather. Though Eastern hemlock is widely confused with poison hemlock (*Conium maculatum*), it is not actually poisonous. In fact, a nutritious tea, rich in Vitamin C, can be made from the needles, twig tips, or inner bark.

The future of the Eastern hemlock is currently being threatened by an invasive insect, the hemlock wooly adelgid (HWA). You can check trees for evidence of this insect by looking for a white cotton-like substance on the underside of the needles. If your trees are infected, there are DIY and professional arborist treatment options.



Showcase a Resource:

Westmoreland Conservation District

By Terry Gates

If you are like me, you love to look out the window on a rainy, stormy day. Nature is fascinating, and I enjoy the luxury of watching storms.

Lately, however, storms have become more common and more severe. Now when I look out my window, I often see my gutters overflowing and rainwater pounding and ponding in my backyard. Yikes!

I worry about my basement as the water rushes down my front yard and into the stormwater system. "What a huge waste," I think.

I decided maybe it doesn't have to be this way. I visited the Westmoreland Conservation District website and found they share my concern. I read with interest: "Runoff can cause a number of problems, including overburdening the storm sewer systems, creating flooding, and degrading the quality of the water." This I knew all too well from experience.

“Traditional stormwater management works to reduce runoff and so lessen its damaging effects. Innovative approaches in managing stormwater can actually create beneficial uses, such as rain gardens,” the website said.

A rain garden? Great idea. So I contacted the Westmoreland Conservation District and obtained great advice from Kathy Hamilton, the landscape architect and stormwater technician. She even gave me plans suggesting the best plants and the dimensions of my rain garden. I hope to start building my garden this spring, so stay tuned.

If you'd like to discuss stormwater options with Kathy, you can reach her at (724) 837-5271 or kathyh@wcdpa.com.

WWIA 2020 Calendar

March 19, 6:30 p.m. Jesse Kreye, assistant professor of fire and natural resources management at Penn State, will talk about fire and resource management.

April 16, 6:30 p.m.-2:00 p.m. A presentation by Kevin Yoder of The Nature Conservancy (TNC), PA chapter, on a carbon-capture program in which companies buy carbon credits from small-acreage landowners and family forests.

May 16 (Saturday), 9:30 a.m.–2:00 p.m. Field trip to Penguin Court, the former Scaife family estate in Laughlintown now owned by the Brandywine Conservancy.

June 13 (Saturday), 9:00 a.m. to about 2:30 p.m. David Planinsek, DCNR forester, will lead our tenth annual Forbes State Forest field trip and skills day. Topic TBD.

September 17, 6:30 p.m. A program on how to handle stormwater and its effects. Speaker TBA.

October 4. WWIA's third annual **Walk in Penn's Woods**. Time and location TBA.

October 15, 6:00 p.m. The annual WWIA potluck dinner and business meeting, featuring the biennial election of officers and voting directors. Program to follow TBA, most likely on deer management for forest landowners and managers.

Please check westmorelandwoodlands.org for the latest information about program times and places.

2020 Officers

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Janet Sredy

Tim Troup

Technical Advisor, Newsletter Editor

Celine Colbert

We honor Andy Zborovsky, who passed away on November 18, 2019. We are thankful for his many years of service to WWIA.

Westmoreland Woodlands Improvement Association

Membership Application and Renewal – Dues \$10 per year

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

New Member () or Renewal () Date: _____ Email Address: _____

If you own property, how many acres do you own? _____ Approximately how many of them are wooded? _____

Make check payable to

Westmoreland Woodlands Improvement Association

Mail to

Westmoreland Woodlands Improvement Association

c/o Westmoreland Conservation District

218 Donohoe Road, Greensburg, PA 15601

Attention: Tony Quadro

www.westmorelandwoodlands.org

Westmoreland Woodlands
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c/o Westmoreland Conservation District
218 Donohoe Road,
Greensburg, PA 15601

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