



THE EDWARD L. ROSE CONSERVANCY

Conservancy Currents



Spring 2016

Conservancy Participates in Broome County Earthfest 2016

Board members Keith Oberg and Kenna Lou Mills recently represented the Conservancy at Earth Fest, a celebration of Earth Day. Joined by Cornell interns Karen Ceballos and Dana Dessereaux (pictured right), who showcased live amphibians to participants, Keith and Kenna Lou highlighted the Conservancy's role in helping landowners conserve the land they love for future generations.



The mission of Earth Fest is to increase public knowledge and awareness of environmental concerns, programs and products. Earth Fest draws over 3,000 visitors and each year.

Conservancy Members Take to the Trails at High Point Preserve

A big thanks to Roxie Oberg, Russ Cole, Kenna Lou Mills, Beth and Evan Everett (and kids!), Scott Heckman, Andy and Maria Corea, James Matthews, and for helping out at the High

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Point trail cleanup on April 23rd! The event was a big success. Special thanks to Keith Oberg for doing a great job organizing and running the cleanup!



Greenwood Sanctuary Frog and Salamander Excursion

Save the date - register today!

When: Saturday, June 4, 1-3 pm

Where: Greenwood Sanctuary, Dimock, PA

Registration is required through the Montrose Adult School. A registration form can be found at <http://www.montroseadultschool.org/Registration-Form.pdf>. Please mail the form with your payment (\$5) to: Montrose Area Adult School, PO Box 433, Montrose, PA 18801



Join us for a fun and rewarding hike at the Conservancy's beautiful Greenwood Sanctuary where we will discover a variety of amphibian species common to the region. Learn how and where to search for salamanders, frogs and toads and find out about the unique biological characteristics and unusual life cycles of these animals. Explore their habit, habitat needs and steps you can take to benefit these animals. Find out how you can get involved in a newly launched effort to find and document the presence of amphibians and reptiles in Pennsylvania (Pennsylvania Amphibian and Reptile Survey).

Wanted: Citizen Scientists with Cameras! ***The Pennsylvania Mammal Atlas needs your help***

It's just before dark and you see an elusive mammal. If you are lucky, you snap a good picture before it takes off. You wonder if others have seen it too. Is it common to find this animal in your county? Now you can find out.

The Pennsylvania Game Commission and its partners at the Pennsylvania Biological Survey have created a website for just that. When visiting www.pamammalatlasc.com you can browse maps, statistics, photographs, and descriptions of each wild mammal species in Pennsylvania. You also can search through photographs submitted by other outdoor enthusiasts.

Consider registering as a volunteer and sharing your own photographs while you are at it. In doing so, you will greatly help biologists working on the Pennsylvania Mammal Atlas and you will be helping to document the species present in our region! Share some of your photos with us and we will post them on the Conservancy web site and Facebook page!

What is the Pennsylvania Mammal Atlas?

The Pennsylvania Mammal Atlas is a project designed to map the current locations of the 64 wild mammal species found in Pennsylvania. Atlas projects aren't a new idea, but this is the first such project for mammals in Pennsylvania.

"The result of this project will be an approximately 10-year snapshot of Pennsylvania wild mammal distributions" said Lindsey Heffernan, a wildlife biologist for the Pennsylvania Game Commission. "While professional biologists will be traveling around the state conducting in-depth surveys, we simply can't cover enough ground. Citizen scientists will be crucial in helping us to search the entire Commonwealth."

Why is the Pennsylvania Mammal Atlas Important?

In completing the Pennsylvania Mammal Atlas project, citizens and researchers will gather much-needed information on rare and elusive mammal species. Species distribution maps will be updated, and researchers will have a greater foundation for future projects and a better understanding of where to focus conservation efforts.

"This project is also important long-term, as the world we live in is constantly changing," Heffernan said. "Climate change, human activities, and population growth are among the list of things that could, and likely will, have some effect on wild animals. "By creating a repeatable atlas, biologists will have the data they need to analyze those changes in mammal distributions past, present, and future," Heffernan said.



A beaver caught on camera by Conservancy volunteer Tim Matthews.

Natural Gas Issue Update

A number of notable actions related to natural gas development in our region have occurred in recent months.

1) The Northeast Energy Direct (NED) pipeline project, which was proposed to travel through Susquehanna County and the Woodbourne Nature Preserve, has been suspended indefinitely as a result of inadequate capacity commitments from prospective customers. To read more, visit the project web site at

http://www.kindermorgan.com/business/gas_pipelines/east/neenergydirect/. The NED pipeline would have essentially paralleled the proposed Constitution pipeline through Pennsylvania. The project could be re-initiated in the future.

2) Construction of the 125-mile Constitution pipeline has been halted for now because the company was not able to obtain all the necessary permits from New York State. In New York, the project would create a new, 99-mile corridor not contiguous with existing utility rights-of-way. The project would have crossed New York state through Broome, Chenango, Delaware, and Schoharie counties before meeting other pipelines in the town of Wright, near Albany. Twenty-five miles of right-of-way through Susquehanna County, Pennsylvania were cut this winter.

New York's Department of Environmental Conservation said the Constitution Pipeline failed to meet the state's water-quality standards because it would cross ecologically sensitive areas, old-growth forests and some 250 streams, including trout spawning streams and undisturbed springs. The DEC said Williams had refused a request for a detailed analysis of its plans to bury the pipeline at a sufficient depth beneath the 250 streams. For a map of the proposed pipeline, visit <http://constitutionpipeline.com/maps/>

3) Seneca Lake Gas Storage Project - On hold for two years, the project to expand natural gas storage along Seneca Lake has been waiting to get a permit from the Department of Environmental Conservation. This month, the federal agency that regulates natural gas projects, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, gave the company more time to complete the project. The project would convert salt caverns previously used for liquefied petroleum gas storage to use for natural gas storage. Opponents are concerned about methane migration into communities with possible subsequent explosions, the potential pollution of Seneca Lake, and potential impacts to the wine industry and tourism in the region.

Wild Things in Your Woodlands - Eastern Wild Turkey



The Eastern wild turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo*) is a large, ground-feeding bird. Adult males, called "toms" or "gobblers", have a dark glossy black-brown body, red, blue and white skin on their heads, and a long "beard" of hair-like feathers on their chests. Males have spurs on their legs that can be up to 1 1/2 inches long and are used to fight other males. Toms generally measure 2 1/2 to 3 feet tall and weigh between 16 and 20 pounds. However, they can weigh up

to 25 pounds. Female turkeys (hens) are smaller than toms, usually measuring 2 feet tall and weighing 9 to 12 pounds. Less ornate than toms, hens have a rusty-brown body and a blue-gray head, and almost all hens lack beards or leg spurs.

While Benjamin Franklin was unsuccessful in making the turkey the United State's national bird, the turkey still holds an important place in American culture and environments. The wild turkey is native to North America and is one of only two domesticated birds native to the New World. Habitat loss and overhunting led to massive population declines in the 1800s, and the last original wild turkeys disappeared from New York around the mid 1840s. Wild turkeys did not return to the state until 1949, nearly 100 years later, when wild turkeys from Pennsylvania crossed the border into New York. Thanks to reintroduction efforts, an estimated 250,000 to 300,000 wild turkeys now roam New York woodlands. They generally form single gender flocks of 5 to 50 individuals, with home ranges varying from 400 to 2,000 acres. Turkeys need a variety of habitats to support their feeding, breeding and roosting needs, so ideal ranges include a mixture of woodlands, fields, meadows, brush lands and swampy forests.

Wild turkeys are omnivorous, and their diet varies greatly with what's available in the season. In spring and summer, adults feed on various vegetation (tubers, roots, flowers, fruits), insects (grasshoppers, dragonflies), other invertebrates (snails), and even small vertebrates (salamanders, frogs, small snakes). In midsummer, two or more broods will often combine, forming a flock that will roam over wide areas in search of food. In late summer and early fall, flocks will spend more time in the woodlands foraging on fruits, seeds and nuts like beechnuts and acorns.

During the winter, turkeys will merge into large flocks, sometimes exceeding 200. They move around less, choosing to stay around valley farm fields where they can eat waste grain and manure, or near spring seeps usually free of ice and snow. They eat vegetation, fruits and nuts left over from the fall, scratching through 4 to 6 inches of snow to find food if needed. Turkeys will spend a week or greater roosting if a severe winter storm hits, and can survive up to two weeks without food.

Turkeys can walk, run, fly and even swim. They can run at 12mph and fly at speeds around 40 to 55 mph. They have keen hearing and superb eyesight. This is crucial for the survival of young turkeys, which are heavily preyed upon by mink, weasels, domestic dogs, coyotes, raccoons, skunks and snakes. Sixty to seventy percent of poults (young turkeys) die during their first four weeks of life. Their vulnerability is unsurprising considering their only defense is to scatter and remain still until their mother gives the all-clear signal. Mature turkeys are preyed upon by foxes, bobcats, fisher, coyotes and great-horned owls.

Harkened by the tom's iconic "gobble", breeding season begins in late March or early April and continues through early June. Toms will stake out an individual breeding territory and gobble loudly to attract females and repel competing males. If a female approaches, the tom will begin his courtship dance, fluffing out his body feathers, fanning his broad tail, dragging his wings and strutting about. If he passes inspection, mating occurs and then the hen departs alone to nest. The male continues calling and dancing, and will try to mate with as many females as possible.

After leaving the dance floor, the hen seeks out a wooded or brushy area to create her loosely formed nest, a shallow depression in the soil lined with dried leaves. Areas with dense brush, tall grasses or plenty of fallen trees or branches make the best nesting habitat. In the absence of suitable nesting habitats or poor weather conditions, females can store sperm and delay fertilization for up to 8 weeks. She'll lay 10 to 15 cream colored or light brown eggs, which will

hatch around late May or early June. Soon after, the hen moves her young (poults) to grassy areas where they can feast on insects. If the poults survive, they will leave their mothers and join hen and tom flocks in the fall.

Since 2000-01, wild turkey populations have been gradually declining. The causes of this decline are still unknown, but has been attributed to predator increases, poor habitat quality, bad weather conditions (wet springs and summers, severe winters), and natural population contraction as turkey populations shrink to levels that can be supported by current environments. Another factor may be the arrival of a new disease in the U.S.: Lymphoproliferative Disease Virus (LPDV). LPDV is a tumor-forming virus affecting ground-feeding fowl, and was first confirmed in NY wild turkeys in 2012. Fortunately, preliminary research shows that while the infection is quite widespread and common, the development of tumors in the internal organs and skin rarely occurs. LPDV is most likely not the main cause for turkey declines, but much is still unknown about the disease.

You can help support turkey populations by providing a variety of habitat types and plant species on your land. Keeping in mind that their home ranges can be quite large, think about your land and the surrounding area. Are there good brooding habitats with grasses and forbs that will host plenty of insects for poults to feed on and nearby brushy escape cover? Is there good nesting habitat with low brush cover? If you're logging an area, consider leaving and scattering the tops of trees to provide cover for nesting turkeys. Lastly, is there good winter feeding habitat? You may want to plant food plots of corn, sorghum, millet, sunflower and buckwheat, or simply support local dairy farms, which make up some of the best turkey winter feeding grounds. For more information on creating wild turkey winter habitat, visit <http://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/7279.html>.

You can also help wildlife biologists monitor wild turkey populations by taking part in the NY DEC Winter Wild Turkey Flock Survey conducted January through March. If you've sighted wild turkeys in your area and want to help the DEC monitor the health of wild turkey populations, visit <http://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/48756.html>. You can also help during August, when a similar survey is conducted to assess the reproductive success of wild turkeys this year <http://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/48732.html>.

By Karen Ceballos

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