

# CountryViews

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE COUNTRYSIDE CONSERVANCY



## Conservancy Adds Trostle Pond to Lackawanna State Park

In the Fall 2006 issue of this newsletter, we profiled an outstandingly beautiful property that the Countryside Conservancy had recently acquired. Trostle Pond, a 34-acre property in a Residential zone on Route 407, right on the doorstep of Lackawanna State Park, was listed for sale in 2005. The Conservancy, seeing a property at high risk of being broken up and built over, moved rapidly to purchase the land. We drew on funds held in our Whitney Chamberlin Fund, established in memory of a young environmentalist by his parents, and supplemented it with a loan from the Norcross Wildlife Foundation.



*Photo: Kathryn LeSoine*

The Conservancy's goal in buying the land was to ensure that this beautiful spot neighboring the Park was not lost forever to public enjoyment. The Conservancy did little with the property in the following months except to build a gravel parking area off Route 407 to allow visitors to access the property more easily. The Benton Township planning commission had suggested the addition of a parking area when the Conservancy took ownership of the property in 2006.

At the time, we were not sure what the long-term disposition of the land would be. Perhaps we would continue to own and manage it, as we do other properties like Little Rocky Glen. Perhaps we would place a conservation easement on it and seek a private buyer—but an easement restrictive enough to protect the land's beauty would lower the market value of the property to a point where selling it might not be worthwhile. Meanwhile, our land-acquisition funds were severely depleted by this major transaction.

As it turns out, the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR), the division of the state government that manages our state park system, was interested in adding this property to Lackawanna State Park. However, DCNR was not in a position to move as rapidly as a private entity like the Conservancy to purchase the land.

The Conservancy began talking with the State Park management early on, and it gradually became clear that there was a real chance that DCNR might have the funds to take over the property. We spent much of 2007 moving this process forward, and we are happy to report that in January 2008 we transferred ownership of the property to the state for inclusion in Lackawanna State Park.

The Park will manage Trostle Pond and the surrounding land as part of the Bull Hill management unit of the Park which adjoins it to the south and east. Management objectives for this part of the Park include maintaining a diversified vegetative composition and providing an area for environmental study and passive recreational activities. An old road running along the southeast property line leads naturally to the Park's Bull Hill trail. Apart from a sign at the parking area identifying it as part of the Park, no appreciable

## Save the Date for Countryside Conservancy Events!

**Annual Meeting:** Thursday, April 10, 4:30 pm, President's Dining Room, Keystone College.

**Stewardship Awards:** Wednesday, May 7, 7:00 pm, Evans Hall, Keystone College. Coffee bar and desserts.

Both are free events, and the public is warmly invited. Please call the office at 945-6995 for more information.



## Countryside Conservancy

PO Box 55  
La Plume PA 18440  
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www.countrysideconservancy.org  
cconserv@epix.net

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### Mission:

The Countryside Conservancy is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to protecting lands and waters in and near the Tunkhannock Creek Watershed for the public benefit now, and for the future.

The Countryside Conservancy is a tax-exempt organization as provided by IRS regulations. A copy of the official registration and financial information may be obtained by calling toll free, within Pennsylvania, 1-800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.

## Trostle Pond

*Continued from Page 1*

changes to the property are anticipated.

This is a terrific outcome for the land and for the Park. The Conservancy has found a responsible, conservation-minded owner for the land—an owner that already manages over 1,400 acres of neighboring natural lands for public enjoyment. The pond, fields and woods will remain forever open for public use and enjoyment. The Conservancy has been able to pay off its loan from the Norcross Wildlife Foundation and replenish the Whitney Chamberlin Fund, which thus serves as a revolving fund of ready money for land or easement purchases when time is of the essence.

We wish to express our sincere thanks to the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, particularly to Park Manager Rex Lord and Real Estate Technician Daniel Pierce, and also to Lackawanna State Park manager Alex Stout, for their interest and support in this very successful partnership.

We also warmly thank the donors of the Whitney Chamberlin Fund, Will Chamberlin Jr. and Katie Constable, for their foresight and generosity in establishing this fund for protection of critical lands. We express our gratitude to the Norcross Wildlife Foundation for extending a no-interest loan to help finance the land purchase.

We are grateful to Doug Thomas, the former owner of Trostle Pond, for his willingness to work with the Conservancy. We thank the owners of the Park Store, who placed a trash can at the parking area to help keep the area litter-free during the Conservancy's ownership. And we thank everyone in the community who showed their support and enthusiasm for keeping this land green and beautiful forever. Thanks to you all, it will be!

## Upcoming Events

In addition to our **Annual Meeting on April 10** and our **2008 Stewardship Awards on May 7**, the Conservancy welcomes your participation in the following spring events!

**Thu., March 13: Billy B and Bio Bio Biodiversity** at Scranton Cultural Center. Performances at 10 am and 7 pm (see item on page 4).

**Wed., March 26: NRCS Grazing Workshop**, Harford Volunteer Fire Hall. Topic: "Today's Grass-based Agriculture." 8:30 am to 4 pm. Call Kris Ribble at (570) 784-4401 ext. 111 to register.

**Sat., April 12: Green Day** at Boscov's, 11 am-3 pm.

**Sat., April 26: Abington Little League Trail tending and landscaping day**, Ackerly Fields. 9 am to noon.

**April 19 to 27: National Parks Week** at Steamtown National Historic Site (see item on page 4).

**Sat., May 31: Abington Little League Trail tending and landscaping day**, Ackerly Fields. 9 am to noon.

**Sat., May 3: Wildflower Walk** at Messimer Preserve, led by Len and Gerri Janus (see item on page 4).

Call Mary at the Conservancy office, 945-6995 to get involved with any of these events.



## Land Protected in Abington Township



*Dorrance walks along one of the property's stone walls.*

With the help of some dedicated landowners, the Countryside Conservancy protected more of our local landscape in 2007. Two of those landowners are Dorrance and Susan Belin.

The Belins own a 31-acre property in Waverly, Abington Township, Lackawanna County. The property harbors native hardwood forest, pine plantation and wetlands in addition to the Belin home. The land is part of an old farm: many stone walls in good condition run through the property, and remains of a piggery, a chicken run, and a small quarry are still visible on the land. Dorrance and Susan have lived and raised their family here since 1972.

The land that Dorrance and Susan purchased in 1972 was part of a larger parcel originally purchased by a family member in 1916; this was the property where Dorrance was raised. Dorrance loved playing in the swamp here as a child. He trapped muskrats in the swamp as a boy, and still recalls one exciting morning when he found a mink in his trap!

Dorrance and Susan are no strangers to conservation. Both are keen (not to say unstoppable) outdoors enthusiasts who walk, bike, snowshoe and ski the countryside in every season. They are Pennsylvania natives and long-time Waverly residents. Soon after returning to the area in 1971, Dorrance helped establish the Pennsylvania chapter of

The Nature Conservancy. In 1982, he received The Nature Conservancy's National Oak Leaf Award for significant volunteer service. In 1996, he joined the Board of Directors of the Countryside Conservancy. As an attorney, Dorrance has donated uncounted hours of legal work to advance the Conservancy's land conservation projects, and has helped protect many acres in our region.

Dorrance and Susan had known for some time that they wanted to conserve their home and surrounding lands for the future. Starting in early 2007, they worked with Countryside Conservancy to place a conservation easement on their land. The easement was finalized and recorded in December 2007.

Since Dorrance is a member of the Conservancy's Board of Directors, we applied our Conflicts of Interest policy to every aspect of this transaction. The Conservancy, having discussed the issue at length, feels that there is no reason to prohibit Board members from donating land or conservation easements to the Conservancy. In fact, entering into a land-conservation agreement with the Conservancy is one more way in which a Board member can serve as an ambassador for the Conservancy's work.

However, since donations of land or easements create opportunities for tax deductions and hence financial benefit, conflicts of interest are inevitable. Therefore, "conflicted" parties may not be present during Committee or Board discussions and voting on land projects involving them. And the conservation value of their properties must be assessed, if anything, more critically than other land projects the Conservancy takes on.

In this case, the conservation values were clear. The Belins' 31-acre parcel connects two properties totaling 34 acres that are already protected by the Conservancy. This continuous expanse of 65 acres now protects one of the headwaters of Ackerly Creek, and provides natural habitat and visual relief to passersby on North Abington Road at a gateway to the Waverly historic district. The Conservancy is most grateful to Dorrance and Susan for taking this important step to protect their lands forever.

We will introduce more of our newly protected properties in coming issues of CountryViews. If you would like information about protecting your own land, please contact Mary or Rylan at the Conservancy office, (570) 945-6995 or [cconserv@epix.net](mailto:cconserv@epix.net).



*This wetland in the Ackerly headwaters is now protected by conservation easement.*

## SPRING EVENTS

### Billy B Brings Bio Bio Biodiversity



Countryside Conservancy is promoting a coming event at the Scranton Cultural Center, as the one and only **Billy B** comes to town!

Billy B will perform his show “**Bio Bio Biodiversity**” at the Scranton Cultural Center at the Masonic Temple on **March 13, 2008**.

A Billy B show is “an experience in kinetic learning,” which means that you’ll be on your feet and in motion along with Billy for much of the show! Billy B and children all over the country have “danced their way to a better understanding of the natural world.” Kids will get to move around and make noise while learning about biodiversity—the astounding variety of living things that inhabit our Earth. From soil microbes to coral reefs to dwellers in the rainforest, Billy will have you acting out parts and singing along! In fact, we have it on good authority that your kids will remember Billy B’s songs for years to come. For older students, Billy B will present human activities causing problems for the world’s biodiversity, and possible solutions to the problems we face.

A School Matinee for student groups starts at 10:00 am, and an evening show for family groups begins at 7:00 pm. Both performances will be held at the Scranton Cultural Center at the Masonic Temple on North Washington Avenue. Tickets are \$7 per person for the 10:00 am Student Matinee and \$13 per person for the 7:00 pm Family Show. Group discounts are also available.

These performances are sponsored in part by the Overlook Estate Foundation.

Billy B’s “Bio Bio Biodiversity” program was commissioned and approved by the World Wildlife Fund. Countryside Conservancy is helping promote this event because we recognize that we must help children understand the incredible natural diversity and fragility of our world if we are to have any hope of preserving it.

For more information on show times, tickets, discounts, study guides for this program, and opportunities to bring a Bio Bio Biodiversity related activity to your school, contact Stefanie Bush, Artist Educator for the Scranton Cultural Center by phone at 346-7369 ext. 122 or by email at [stefanie@scrantoncultural-center.org](mailto:stefanie@scrantoncultural-center.org).

### Wildflower Walk, May 3



Len and Gerry Janus of Vileniki—An Herb Farm will lead a Wildflower Walk at the

Conservancy’s Messimer Preserve on Saturday, May 3. The Januses have compiled a wildflower inventory of this beautiful wooded property on the banks of the South Branch Tunkhannock Creek, which the Conservancy has owned since 2005. The Messimer Preserve is not one of our best-known properties, but it is well worth getting to know. We thank the Januses for providing this guided tour of the property’s natural riches!

This is an easy walk of a mile or so. Participants should wear solid walking shoes and dress for the weather. The group will gather at the Lackawanna State Park office on Route 524 at 9:00 am, and carpool over to the Messimer Preserve on Grist Mill Road.

The walk is free, but please call the Conservancy office at 945-6995 or email [cconserv@epix.net](mailto:cconserv@epix.net) to sign up in case of weather cancellations.

### Northern Electric Trolley at Steamtown

Countryside Conservancy will bring a little piece of the Northern Electric Trolley to Steamtown National Historic Site for its National Parks Week, April 19-27.

As regular readers of CountryViews know, the Conservancy is working to turn part of the Northern Electric right of way into a non-motorized “Trolley Trail” for public enjoyment. We are delighted to have this opportunity through Steamtown to highlight our work with the Trolley and the Trail! We are planning to hold a book signing of *The Northern Electric* with author Norm Brauer at Steamtown on one of the weekend April dates. Please check our website and local papers for details closer to the date. If you can’t make it to Steamtown, you can still order Norm’s book from our office; please call 945-6995 or email [cconserv@epix.net](mailto:cconserv@epix.net) to order your copy!

This is a most timely opportunity to promote the Northern Electric and the Trolley Trail, as 2008 marks the centennial of the Northern Electric’s first run in 1908. The Conservancy expects to make more headway in securing the use of several sections of the Trolley Trail this year.



## Countryside Conservancy Applies for Accreditation, Seeks Public Comment

As we mentioned in our Fall 2007 newsletter, Countryside Conservancy is entering into the new accreditation program offered by the national Land Trust Accreditation Commission, an independent program of the Land Trust Alliance. The accreditation program recognizes land conservation organizations that meet national quality standards for permanently protecting important natural places and working lands. Cheryl Ellsworth, the Conservancy's Program Manager and leader of our accreditation drive, says that "Laying this foundation [of accreditation] is key to our future viability as a conservation organization."

We have submitted our pre-application and will not submit our formal application until May 1, but we are taking this opportunity to **invite public comment** upon our application now.

The Land Trust Accreditation Commission, invites public input and will accept signed, written comments from the public on pending applications for accreditation. Any interested party is invited to submit comments on Countryside Conservancy and its application to the Land Trust Accreditation Commission. Comments must relate to how Countryside Conservancy complies with national quality standards. These standards address the ethical and technical operation of a land trust. For the full list of standards, please visit [www.landtrustaccreditation.org/getting-accredited/2008-indicator-practices](http://www.landtrustaccreditation.org/getting-accredited/2008-indicator-practices).

Comments will be shared with the applicant for a response, but the name of the commenter may be withheld from the applicant at the staff's discretion if releasing the name would have adverse consequences for the person making the comment.

To learn more about the accreditation program or to submit a comment, please visit [www.landtrustaccreditation.org](http://www.landtrustaccreditation.org). Comments may also be faxed or mailed to the Land Trust Accreditation Commission at 112 Spring Street, Suite 204, Saratoga Springs, NY 12866 (fax: 518-587-3183, email: [info@landtrustaccreditation.org](mailto:info@landtrustaccreditation.org)). Correspondence should be marked "Attn: Public Comments" and should be submitted by June 14, 2008.

## Board and Advisory Board News

As of February 7, Countryside Conservancy is very happy to welcome Jack Muller as our new Board President and Bill Booth as our new Treasurer.

Jack succeeds Margaret Hull, who has led the Conservancy confidently forward in acreage protected, strategic planning and national accreditation since she stepped up to the Presidency in 2005. Bill succeeds George Ginader, who has uncomplainingly served as Treasurer since 2000. George has carefully guided and tracked the Conservancy's financial resources through a period of remarkable growth, working patiently with a staff which includes not a single financial or accounting professional.

We thank Margaret and George for their quiet leadership, their tireless service, and their gentle and patient manner. We are glad to report that both of them continue their service on the Board.

In other news, Advisory Board member Dr. Walter Broughton has a new book, *Lake Carey*, scheduled for release on April 28. It is an illustrated history of the lake, part of Arcadia Publication's Images of America Series. Walter wrote the book "to increase public awareness of the lake's heritage and the natural beauty that drew people to it." Royalties will be donated to the Lake Carey Conservation Fund.

## Website to be Relunched



By the time you read this (or very shortly thereafter), the Countryside Conservancy website will have a new look! We are re-launching [www.countrysideconservancy.org](http://www.countrysideconservancy.org) with a new layout, great new colors and graphics, and—at long last—photos and maps of our preserves and trails. You'll know you're looking at our new website if you see a curly-haired girl smiling out from a patch of Black-Eyed Susans on the home page.

All credit is due to Kelly Hilsey and Phil Condron of Condron & Company for applying their creative hands in the design of the new website, and for making a most generous donation of their top-notch work to the Conservancy. Their expertise and execution are a truly priceless gift. Tim Eichner most capably converted Kelly's concepts and designs into workable HTML format, and worked with Conservancy staffer Rylan Coker to integrate maps onto the site. Thanks to all for your hard work and artistry, which will help us present a much more attractive face to our Internet visitors!

## In Memoriam

We offer our thanks to the following individuals who have made gifts to the Conservancy in memory of or in honor of individuals. These gifts will be placed in the Conservancy's Land Fund to support our land protection activities throughout the region.

*In memory of Harold R. Jones:*  
Priscilla Meyette  
Barbara Fortney  
Pam Jones Faust

*In memory of Larry Theilgard:*  
Warren and Phyllis Watkins

*In memory of Eugene Monick:*  
Jean and Chris Colombo  
Dorrance and Susan Belin

*In memory of Kevin Boyle:*  
Eugene and Janet Geeza

*In memory of Mrs. Sherrouse:*  
Natalie G. Solfanelli and staff of  
Lackawanna Heritage Valley Authority

*In memory of Thomas Lebowitz:*  
Barry and Donna Kaplan

*In honor of Anthony Rhodes, MD:*  
Central Montgomery Medical Center

What better way to remember a departed friend who loved the land, or to celebrate a joyous passage in a loved one's life, than to make a gift? Through the Conservancy you can give the gift of conservation, which goes on forever.



## Trail Update: Courtesy Rides Again

*by Conservancy Board member Bill Booth*



Just as building and maintaining our trails is important, so too is building a culture of courtesy and respect for fellow trail users.

When I lived in the Chestnut Hill neighborhood in Northwest Philadelphia, it afforded incredible access to the nation's largest urban recreation area. At 8,000 acres, Fairmount Park is huge. But as vast as it is, even its most remote sections were often crowded with users. The sheer scale of the population in the region, combined with the wide variety of users, often created environmental problems and unfortunately some serious safety issues. The result was some pretty contentious issues among user groups. The friction ultimately resulted in restrictions on where and when different interests could be pursued in the park.

We certainly do not have these problems in our area. Nevertheless, it's important to keep in mind some important issues around "trail etiquette" that are appropriate in every setting—lest we forget or take for granted just how lucky we are!

First, do not assume that other trail users understand your sport. Always approach other users in a friendly, non-threatening manner. Just because we all enjoy the great outdoors doesn't mean that everyone will appreciate how you enjoy it! You are an ambassador for your favorite pursuit.

From a safety standpoint, remember these simple guidelines:

- Horses Always Yield to Hikers
- Bikers Always Yield to Horses (and Hikers)

In the woods, mountain bikers have extra responsibility. Bikes are faster, and bikers tend to travel in larger groups. This can be intimidating for other users, and even dangerous, particularly for horses which can be spooked (startled) easily. When encountering equestrians, bikers should always dismount with plenty of space between themselves and the horse(s). Speak in soft, friendly tones and wait till the horse is well past before starting up again. Finally, when riding with groups, bikers should always try to announce to hikers and horseback riders the number of riders with you. This way, they can anticipate the number of riders they will encounter.



We are indeed fortunate in our area to have such spectacular and accessible recreational resources to enjoy. The relatively moderate use of these resources by various types of users actually enhances the enjoyment and ensures that trail design and maintenance reflect the unique needs of each group (for example, mountain bikes do a nice job of smoothing out hoof divots, and equestrians are great about clearing higher branches and debris).

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So, as you plan to get out there to enjoy the trails—please remember to let the other users know just how much you appreciate them!

**Watershed Events:  
News from the South Branch  
Tunkhannock Creek Watershed Coalition**

**Monday Night Series Continues with Dragonflies**

Once again, the South Branch Tunkhannock Creek Watershed Coalition offers a series of free Monday night gatherings at Lackawanna State Park to enliven your winter evenings! Our thanks to Angela Lambert and the State Park for providing a great venue for these events.

On January 14, Bob Daniels, president of the Lower Tunkhannock Creek Watershed Coalition, presented the LTCWA's new DVD: *Checking the Creek, Restoring its Nature*. The DVD highlights how high water, excessive runoff, erosion and sedimentation are causing property damage, loss of acreage and water contamination in our local streams. The DVD identifies factors that are exacerbating these problems, such as increases in paved surfaces, filling and alteration of wetlands, floodplain development, and straightening of stream channels. It goes on to present practical approaches to curing these problems: open space preservation, water-efficient landscaping, better parking lot design, wetland and riparian buffer protection, ecological stream channel restoration, tree planting and proper stormwater management.

Bob Daniels is a retired teacher and accomplished naturalist who has taken a leading role in forming and guiding the Lower Tunkhannock Creek Watershed Association. The LTCWA is dedicated to caring for the health of the Tunkhannock Creek's lower watershed, from the area of Nicholson down to the Susquehanna River at Tunkhannock. Bob is available to give this presentation free of charge to municipal officials, school groups, or anyone else interested in protecting our fragile stream systems. For more information, please call Bob at 836-2846.

On February 4, WVIA-TV production coordinator Kathryn Davies and producer Kelly Donaldson were on hand to screen their documentary *Hope for Polluted Waters*. This film introduces a host of everyday people who are working to restore mine-damaged streams across Pennsylvania. Equally inspiring were these people's successes, their quirky individuality, and the fact that they are all "regular folks" who have quietly stepped up to make our waterways fit for life again.

The Watershed Coalition has copies of *Hope for Polluted Waters* and other environmental videos available for loan to interested individuals and groups. Call Mary at the Countryside Conservancy office, 945-6995, to borrow from our collection.



Coming up on **Monday, March 10**, Dr. Jerry Skinner of Keystone College will give a slideshow presentation on dragonflies and their role in the Tunkhannock Creek. Learn about these delicate-looking but fearsome predators of our ponds and creeks! Dr. Skinner holds his PhD in aquatic ecology; at Keystone, he teaches courses including wildlife and fisheries biology, limnology, and field biology. He is the Resident Naturalist

at The Nature Conservancy's Woodbourne Preserve in Susquehanna County, and serves as a Regional Coordinator for the Second Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas.

The dragonfly talk on March 10 starts at 7:00 pm at Lackawanna State Park's Environmental Learning Center, on Route 407. Admission and refreshments are free, and all are welcome! Please call 945-7110 for directions.

**Water Quality Monitoring**



The Watershed Coalition is making preparations to kick off its 2008 water-quality testing season in April. We hope this year to extend testing to the eastern half of the watershed, possibly including sites in Abington, North Abington, Benton, Scott or Greenfield Township. If you live in any of these areas and might be interested in taking part, please call Mary at 945-6995 to get involved. It is easy and interesting work, and all training is provided on the job!

**Adopt a Highway**

The South Branch Tunkhannock Creek Watershed Coalition is applying to adopt a highway, or at least a piece of one—the section of Route 407 that passes through the heart of Lackawanna State Park, from the Route 524 intersection up to Chase Road. It's a good choice for the group, lying as it does in the heart of the South Branch Tunkhannock Creek watershed and passing through the State Park in a highly visible, high-traffic area. Once PennDOT accepts the application, the group hopes to start litter pickups this spring, and all members of the community are invited to join us! We will clean up this stretch of road several times per year. Please call Mary at the Conservancy office, 945-6995, if you would like to be on the Adopt A Highway team and be notified of litter pickup dates in advance.



**Join Countryside Conservancy's efforts to preserve the fragile natural beauty of our area.  
The future depends on us. Please join us today.**

\_\_\_\_\_ Family \$35

\_\_\_\_\_ Friend \$70

\_\_\_\_\_ Founder \$100

\_\_\_\_\_ Patron \$250

\_\_\_\_\_ Benefactor \$500

\_\_\_\_\_ Trust Partner \$1,000 and up

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Consider a gift to the Countryside Conservancy in honor of someone you care about. The gift of conservation will last forever.  
For more information contact Mary Felley at P.O. Box 55, La Plume PA 18440. (570) 945-6995 or cconserv@epix.net



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