



Volume 17 Issue 4

Rails to Trails of Central PA Inc.

July/August 2012

SPRING GATHERING & RAFFLE



Over 100 people came out to enjoy this year's annual Spring Gathering on May 6th. The weather was great for the first time in 5 years.



Todd Emeigh and Michelle Wantz served as the Grill Masters, cooking all the Hamburgers, Kielbasa and Hotdogs to perfection.

After enjoying the meats and all the delicious salads, casseroles and deserts that were brought by all who attended we had the drawing for the raffle prizes.

This year's Raffle winners were:

- 1st Prize:** Ken Brenneman from Williamsburg
- 2nd Prize:** Leonard Yoder from Belleville
- 3rd Prize:** Destiny Buckwatter from Honey Brook
- 4th Prize:** Jack Stefanko from Portage
- 5th Prize:** Samuel Hess from Hollidaysburg

Again this year, Tom Fisher from Williamsburg was our top ticket sales person, selling over 250 tickets. He sold the first place ticket this year as well.

Thank you to everyone who sold their raffle tickets. A special thank you to Spokes-n-skis of Lakemont, Rothrock Outfitters of Huntingdon, Hoss's Steak and Sea House, and Moosewood Laser Creations of Belleville for donating this year's prizes. Also, thanks to Holland Brothers Meats of Duncansville and Hoss's for donating all the meats for the picnic. Please remember these businesses when you are in need of services that they provide; the companies greatly support Rails to Trails. Remember to mark your calendar for next year's gathering, which is usually the first Sunday in May.

MOTHER NATURE:

Over the past few weeks the summer has been hot and dry, but Mother Nature kept our tree trimming volunteers very busy at the end of May and beginning of June. When it decided to rain, it rained buckets and brought high winds with it, at one point downing 50 plus trees and large branches. Our volunteers were immediately working on the clean up BUT we needed extra help.



Thanks go to the **Huntingdon Correctional Facility** which brought a crew of men to help. BUT even then we needed additional help. There were several very large trees that became hung up due to the way they fell...they were very dangerous "widow makers". We owe a great thank you to Ernest Ebersole, owner of Lofty Heights Logging and Tree Trimming of Hollidaysburg. He donated his time and equipment to safely remove these dangerous trees.

You can also do your part in keeping the trail clear of smaller fallen branches. If you see sticks or small branches on the trail or mowed surface, please don't just ride by them; stop and throw the branches off into the higher weeds. This will greatly help our volunteers who mow the grass along the trail.

JOHN HEALY MEMORIAL RACE:



At 6 PM on June 13th, about 65 runners ran the 5k race on the Lower Trail. This year we had runners from the Altoona Cross Country team race as well as runners from as far away as Florida. The weather cooperated this year, not being too hot as it was last year and no severe thunder storms blew in during the race. A great thank you goes out to Phil Sukenik the race organizer and all the volunteers who made it a success. We would also like to thank Highmark Blue Cross, Keller Engineers, Endurance Athletics and Hoss's for sponsoring the race this year. If you would like to see the results of the race you may visit <https://davidmapesfinishline.com/>

TREE OF THE MONTH: *The Aesculus* Genus

By Dave Despot



The *Aesculus* genus, which contains horse chestnut and American buckeye trees, includes about 13 species native to Europe, North America, and eastern Asia. Palmate leaves, flowers that are borne in panicles (a branched stalk of flowers in which the individual branches are racemes) and large glossy brown nuts encased in thick

husks are great characteristics for identifying these trees. The buds of buckeye and horse chestnut trees share similar characteristics: large size and greenish brown color, with one important difference. Horse chestnut trees have buds that are coated with a sticky resin. You can tell the difference with a touch of your finger.

My introduction to these trees came as a child. There were many horse chestnut trees growing in the area where I grew up. We used to go and collect the shiny nuts each fall as a treasure, fascinated by their size and deep brown, glossy finish. Apparently I am not the only one fascinated with these seeds. Almost any description of buckeye trees includes some reference to the fact that pioneers often carried a buckeye seed in their pocket to maintain good health and ward off "bad luck". Much later in life, when I began to study trees, I saw my first buckeye tree. The similarities to horse chestnut and yet the subtle differences (for example, no sticky resin on the buds) were remarkable.

Creams and ointments have been traditionally made from the seeds of *Aesculus* trees. They appear to have an anti-

inflammatory and astringent effect. Recent research suggests that a chemical isolated from the seeds, aescin, is an effective remedy for treating sprains and bruises. The ancient Turks apparently had already figured this out. They used the fruits of the horse chestnut tree to treat these conditions in their horses. The tree essence of horse chestnut helps to ease an agitated mind and enhance clarity of thought. I'll end with a note of caution; the nuts of *Aesculus* trees are poisonous if eaten raw.

WILDFLOWER WATCH: MOTH MULLEIN

By Bob Richers



For some unknown reason I find identification of yellow flowers the most challenging. One exception to this is the Mullein family. The Common Mullein with its large distinct stem and the smaller Moth Mullein, to a lesser extent, are different from most other wild flowers.

The Moth Mullein is a member of the Snap Dragon family. This invasive species is native to Eurasia and Northern Africa. Like many tall plants imported to North America with long blooming seasons, it spread like wildfire! It blooms from late spring through autumn.

The one inch flower is yellow or white with a slight purple tinge and has five rounded petals. The stamen is orange in color covered with purple hairs resembling a Moth's Antennae, thus the name. The two to five inch plant in bloom has sparse foliage and produces up to 1000 simple dark brown colored fruits that contain

the seeds. The seeds are a preferred snack for Finches who unwillingly help to distribute the plant.

This biennial plant develops a short stock with a basal rosette. The leaves of the rosette are sharp toothed and grow up to eight inches. The plant develops a deep tap root. The second year is when the stem takes off and flowering occurs. Moth Mullein was first discovered in Pennsylvania in the early 1800s. It prefers sunny environments and is found in fields, pastures and along roadways.

Folk medicine has found little use for this plant although some mosquito larvae exposed to methanol extracted from the leaves were killed. It also seemed to repel coach roaches.

A study conducted at Michigan Agriculture College stored Moth Mullein seeds with 20 other species for 120 years and Mullein when planted resulted in a 50% germination rate. It seems that we may as well just accept the beauty of this noxious weed.

MT ETNA BRIDGE UPDATE:

As we told you in the last newsletter we, Rails to Trails of Central PA Inc., will be re-decking the large wooden-railed bridge at Mt. Etna this fall. Cottle's Asphalt Maintenance Inc. of Everett was awarded the contract based on their low bid of \$73,714. The work will be paid through a federal Transportation Enhancement award. Construction will begin after Labor Day. Once under construction, the trail will be severed at Mt. Etna for approximately two weeks. A detour around the bridge will be established on Fox Run Road. We will keep you updated via the newsletter and on our website (www.rttcpa.org) as this project moves forward.

CULVERT REPAIR

Another project affecting the Lower Trail this summer will be the repair of two drainage culverts near Williamsburg that have become clogged or begun to collapse over the years as a result of flooding. Pepple Excavating, Inc. began work on the culverts on July 11th. Construction should be completed within three weeks. The \$23,800 cost of the project is being covered by grants from the state Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and the Blair County Parks and Recreation Advisory Board.

FESABILITY STUDY UPDATE:

Keller Engineers has completed the Feasibility Study for extending the trail from Flowing Springs in Frankstown Township to the Six thru Ten Trail in Juniata Township. The study has been sent to DCNR. Once we receive DCNR's comments, we will schedule a public meeting to present this study. This meeting should be early this fall.

TERRY WENTZ MEMORIAL HIKE:



On May 12th, a group gathered at the Terry Wentz Education Center at Canoe Creek State Park for a hike remembering founding Rail Trail member / volunteer / board member, and Park Manager Terry Wentz. It has been

two years since his passing and still we find so many voids that have not been filled in our organization. We can only keep trying to accomplish what Terry did for us in the past and what he wanted for us to achieve for the future.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS:

Sunday July 22nd, Summit Level Hike. This hike is part of the Allegheny Portage National Historic Sites hike series. You may call the park office for more details at, 814-886-6150.

Sunday August 19th, Lower Trail Bike Tour. This ride is also sponsored by the Allegheny Portage National Historic Site as part of their summer events. This ride will begin at Alfarata. For more details and information on this ride as well as their other events, you may call the park office at 814-886-6150.

Sunday August 26th, The Tom Snyder Memorial Walk/Ride. Come enjoy a leisurely afternoon walk/bike ride to remember one of the Lower Trail's great volunteers, Tom Snyder. Meet at the **Grannas Station Trailhead at 2 PM.** If you have any questions, you may contact ride leader Larry Bilotto at 814-935-5558.

If you'd like to schedule an event or if you have questions about an event, please call Stan Kotala, Rails to Trails Event Coordinator at 814-946-8840 or email at ccwiba@keyconn.net

MEMBERSHIP FORM

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone: (____)-_____

E-mail _____

_____New Membership _____Renewal

_____ Individual	\$15.00
_____ Family	\$20.00
_____ Supporting	\$50.00
_____ Group	\$75.00

I am interested in:

_____Horses	_____Hiking
_____Heritage	_____Bicycling
_____Nature Study	_____Jogging
_____Other	

I would like to help by volunteering for:

Make checks payable to:

Rails-to-Trails of Central PA Inc.
 PO Box 592, Hollidaysburg, PA 16648
 (814)-832-2400
www.rttcpa.org

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Sunday, July 22nd **Summit Level Hike**, National Park Service Hike Series
Tuesday, August 14th **Monthly Board Meeting**, 7 PM at the Grannas Station.
Sunday, August 19th **Lower Trail Bike Tour**, National Park Service Program Series
Sunday, August 26th **Tom Snyder Memorial Walk/Ride, 2 PM starting at the Grannas Station**
Tuesday, September 11th **Monthly Board Meeting** 7 PM at the Grannas Station

More details on all events on page 3 of the *Trekker* and on our Web site at www.RTTCPA.org
All are invited to the monthly meetings.

KEEP YOUR ADDRESS CURRENT

This newsletter is mailed 3rd Class Bulk Mail. The Post Office will not forward 3rd Class Bulk Mail. If anything about your address changes, Route Number, Street Numbers, or Zip code, the Trail Trekker will not be forwarded to you. Please keep Rails-to-Trails informed of any address changes by using a post office change of address card or dropping us a note at the following address. Remember, if your mailing address is Highlighted, your membership is about to expire. Please renew quickly and continue to support Rails-to-Trails. Thank You!

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