



Volume 17 Issue 2

Rails to Trails of Central PA Inc.

March/April 2012

LOWER TRAIL NOTED IN:

“RECREATION NEWS”

The January issue of *Recreation News*, a publication that explores getaway destinations in the Mid-Atlantic Region featured an article titled, “Winter Fun Around Altoona”. The article focused on Chimney Rocks, the Lower Trail, Horseshoe Curve, Allegheny Portage Railroad and Canoe Creek State Park.

Here is an excerpt from the article:

“Often a February thaw brings enough sunshine to warrant a comfortable bike ride, and one of the best cycling trails in the state is found in Blair County – the sixteen mile Lower Trail. Six trailheads service the near level trail that stretches from Hollidaysburg to Huntingdon as it follows the abandoned Petersburg Branch of the old Pennsylvania Railroad.

The shimmering Frankstown Branch of the Juniata River is your constant trailside companion, and the route is peppered with historic points of interest. There are old quarries, canal locks, stone arch bridges, mill races, an iron furnace, and the remains of more than 30 old foundations to poke around and explore when you need a break from your saddle. There are multiple opportunities to view the actual prism of the canal ditch along the route.

A two mile section starting in Williamsburg heading north is black-topped, creating the ideal surface for a roller-blade excursion. The Lower Trail also shares its 10 miles of space with the 319 mile Midstate Trail, the longest and wildest marked footpath in Pennsylvania.

Volunteers who trim, mow, and maintain this pleasant, gentle trail also post interesting plastic-coated diagrams and illustrations at historic points of interest. These diagrams explain what once took place here.”

To read the entire article and check out the *Recreation News* publication go to www.recreationnews.com. The article on the trail is in the January 2012 issue on page 28 and 29.

TRAIL FUNDING THREATENED:

Major trail development funding programs at both the state and federal levels are in serious danger of being eliminated.

At the federal level, the proposed new Transportation Bill (MAP-21) calls for the elimination of designated funding for Transportation Enhancements (TE) projects.

TE funding paid for the Canoe Creek Extension of the Lower Trail and is paying for this summer’s re-decking of the Mt. Etna Bridge. The federal Recreational Trails Program is also threatened by the measure.

Please contact Senators Casey and Toomey and ask them to support the Cardin/Cochran amendment to the bill to provide local decision-makers with the access they need to ensure that funds for trails, walking and bicycling are used for their intended purpose, and the Klobuchar/Burr/Shahen/Risch amendment addressing Recreational Trails. Also, you may contact Congressman Shuster to urge his support for dedicated TE funding in the Transportation Bill.

At the state level, Governor Corbett’s budget proposal would transfer \$30 million from the Keystone Recreation, Park and Conservation Fund to the General Fund budget. If approved by the legislature, this would zero out funding for all conservation, park and recreation funding, including recreational trails. These funds, derived from a 15% share of the state’s realty transfer tax, were overwhelmingly approved by the voters and the legislature in 1993.

Rails to Trails of Central Pa. has received a total of \$347,500 from the Keystone Fund for trail design, flood repair and trailhead improvements and the gap feasibility study. Please take time to contact your state senator and representative and ask them to retain dedicated funding for the Keystone Fund in the Commonwealth’s fiscal 2013 budget.

BRIDGE NEWS:



Over the past four years, bridge construction has interrupted the continuity of the Lower Trail. This year is no exception. Construction on the bridge in Williamsburg near the Mini Mart will be finishing up this summer. The trail will remain closed at the road crossing until this construction is complete.

The next interruption will be of our own making. As we announced last year, we were fortunate enough to secure a grant to re-deck one of our bridges. The large wooden-railed bridge at Mt. Etna will be getting a new deck this summer. Design and permitting work for the project have been

completed and construction will be put out for bid in March. Once the construction begins, 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.

Tree of the Month: American Beech

By Dave Despot



American beech, *Fagus grandifolia* is a great native tree. I was inspired to write about it by noticing the beech trees along Rt. 22 in the area of Short Mountain. They are gracing the forest with their gray/brown leaves

held tightly even as we approach the end of February. American beech trees are commonly found in association with ash, sugar maple, oak, and hemlock.

American beech is a large tree by eastern standards, reaching 60 to 80 feet in the forest where growing to the top of the forest canopy is a priority. In an open setting, the species more efficiently captures sunlight by growing horizontally with wide spreading branches. In parks and lawn settings, it is a spectacular tree.



Leaves are oblong with coarse teeth and a sharp pointed tip, 2.5 to 5 inches long; half as wide. Leaf color is blue green on the upper surface with a light green underside. Winter buds are long and pointed with many overlapping scales. The length of the buds alone separates them from the buds of most other species. Twigs are slender, green when young and maturing to light gray. Bark is smooth and light gray in color. It seems quite unusual for a large tree to have such smooth bark.

Flowers are borne in April to May. Trees are monoecious (male and female flowers borne on the same tree) and wind pollinated. The fruit is a triangular nut, enclosed in a bristly hull that splits open to release its contents. The hulls persist on the tree long after the nuts are shed.

The wood is close grained and durable, but hard to season. It is used for flooring, tool handles, furniture, veneer, and fuel. Beech wood tablets were used as writing material in Europe before paper was invented. The word book seems to have been derived from the word beech.

WILDFLOWER WATCH: DUTCHMAN'S BREECHES

By Bob Richers

With the mild weather that we've experienced so far this winter don't be surprised if your favorite spring wild flowers appear a bit earlier than usual.

Dutchman's breeches, one of my favorite spring flowers, is a member of the Poppy family. The flower is also included with the few flowers listed in the basal leaved category. The Squirrel Corn Flower is similar in appearance but does not have that flat ironed look of the Breeches flowers. The ¾ inch

blossoms have 2 tapered upper sections that give the appearance of a pair of pantaloons hanging up to dry. A more fitting name for this flower may have been Mrs. Dutchman's Breeches!

The Breeches was once considered useful for treating syphilis, skin conditions and as a blood purifier by the early Americans. Scientific medicine has once again disproved the idea of treatments based on the appearance of the plant.



The unique flower of Dutchman's breeches contains four petals with the outer two inflated spurs forming a V floral shape. The blossoms are pollinated by early Bumble Bees which have the needed longer proboscis than the Honey Bee. The seed cone is wrapped in a fleshy edible membrane which ants carry back to their nests. Once consumed the remaining hard seed is discarded in the nutrition rich nest waste. Nature does have her many ways!

The flower grows along the Lower Trail from late March to early May. Take a moment on an early outing to enjoy the Dutchman's breeches.

FEASIBILITY 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 for comment and once they have reviewed it, there will be a public meeting to present this study. This meeting should be late spring or early summer.

RAFFLE

You should have received your fifteen raffle tickets with this newsletter. If you did not, please let us know. Our prize providers this year are **Spokes & Skies** of Lakemont; **Rothrock Outfitters** of Huntingdon, **Hoss's Steak & Sea House** of Duncansville and **Moosewood Laser Creations** of Belleville. The drawing will once again take place during the **Spring Gathering**. Mark your calendar for **Sunday, May 6th**.

The raffle is our major fund raiser, which provides a large percentage of our annual operating budget. It is also a way for you to renew your membership. By returning your ticket stubs and money, you extend your membership by one year. This applies to all memberships, even if yours does not expire until January, 2013 for example. By selling the tickets, your expiration date would move to January, 2014. Or, if you do not wish to extend your membership, you may use the ticket sales to give a membership to someone else as a gift.

We understand that not all individuals feel comfortable participating in raffles, let alone fund raisers. If you do not wish to receive tickets, please let us know. If you did receive tickets and do not wish to participate, please accept our apology. You may either return the tickets or destroy them.

We are certainly grateful for every individual's support, either by renewing your membership as it expires, or by participating in this fund raiser. Tickets again this year are \$2.00 apiece. Ticket stubs and checks may be mailed to Rails-to-Trails, PO Box 592, Hollidaysburg, PA 16648. If you should have any questions, please feel free to contact Vickie Brua at vicbrua@atlanticbb.net or Jennifer Barefoot at 814-695-8521, e-mail at rjsunbrook@verizon.net. Thank you!

NOTE THE CHANGE: Due to the request of members, this year's Spring Gathering time has been changed. The gathering will begin at **1 PM**, unlike other years when it began at noon.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS:

Saturday, April 14— **Timberdoodles at Canoe Creek State Park.** The park has a variety of wetlands and old fields that provide ideal habitat for woodcocks. Observe the fascinating and unique flight of the timberdoodle. Meet at Pavilion 1 at 7:30 p.m. For more information, contact trip leader Dr. Stan Kotala at 814 946-8840 or at ccwiba@keyconn.net.

Sunday, April 22 — **SUNDAY TRILLIUM HIKE ON THE LOWER TRAIL:** Come join Deb Tencer to see the repeat performance of thousands of red and yellow trilliums and Dutchman's-breeches that cover the hillside along a section of the Lower Trail. Meet at the Water Street flea market at 11 a.m. The hike is only 2 miles and is quite easy. Afterward, please join us to go for pizza! Contact Deb at naturehikergal@gmail.com for more info.

Sunday, May 6 - **Rails-to-Trails Spring Gathering** - Join us for our annual picnic and drawing for prizes listed on the fund raiser raffle tickets. Bring a dish to share with others. *Always a good time and plenty of food!* Meet at noon at the Mt. Etna Trailhead. Contact Jennifer Barefoot 814-695-8521

Sunday, May 6 — **SPRING MUSHROOM WALK ALONG THE LOWER TRAIL:** Join Bill Russell, author of *Field Guide to the Wild Mushrooms of Pennsylvania and the Mid-Atlantic*, along with Karen Croyle. The Lower Trail is heavily collected for morels, but many other interesting mushrooms are fruiting at this time of year. We might find a few morels as well. The 4-mile hike will take about 3 hours. Meet at the Water Street entrance to the Lower Trail (near the intersection of U.S. Rt. 22 and Pa. Rt. 453) at noon. Contact Juniata Valley Audubon Field Trips Committee Chair Deb Tencer at naturehikergal@gmail.com for more info.

Saturday, May 12 — **Annual Terry Wentz Memorial Hike.** Four-mile moderately easy hike on Moore's Hill Trail honoring former Canoe Creek State Park manager, the late Terry Wentz, who served on the Juniata Valley Audubon and Rails-to-Trails boards of directors for more than a decade. Meet at the Canoe Creek State Park Environmental Education Center at 2 p.m. For more information, contact trip leader Dr. Stan Kotala at 814 946-8840 or at ccwiba@keyconn.net.

May 19, Saturday — **SPRING WILDFLOWER WALK AT BELL'S GAP RUN:** Join Marcia Bonta for a walk in State Gameland 108 at Bell's Gap Run to observe spring wildflowers. Meet in the parking lot for the Bells Gap Trail at 10 a.m. and then drive halfway up the mountain to a parking lot on the left. The walk is a gentle climb that leads past a variety of wildflowers on the left cliffs as well as some rare ferns. It's also a good place for spotting spring warblers and other birds while looking down at large trees and the stream. Bring a trail lunch and a beverage to enjoy at the top of the hollow. For more info contact Marcia at marciabonta@hotmail.com.

Sunday, June 10 — **MOUNTAIN LAUREL HIKE IN BRUSH MOUNTAIN WOODLANDS:** Join Deb Tencer to hike The Nature Conservancy's property known as the Brush Mountain Woodlands to admire the massive amounts of Mountain Laurel, along with other flora and fauna specific to this dry, rocky area. Meet at Panera Bread in Logantown Centre at 11 a.m. to carpool. For more info, contact Deb at naturehikergal@gmail.com.

Wednesday June 13th – **JOHN HEALY MEMORIAL RACE:** Race begins at 6 PM at the Williamsburg Trailhead. For more information contact Phil Sukenik at psukenik@hosscorp.com

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

Tuesday March 13th
Tuesday April 10th
Saturday April 14th
Sunday May 6th
Tuesday May 8th

Monthly Board Meeting, 7 PM at the First United Methodist Church in Hollidaysburg.
Monthly Board Meeting, 7 PM at the First United Methodist Church in Hollidaysburg.
Timberdoodles Hike, 7:30 PM at Canoe Creek State Park, Pavilion 1.
Spring Gathering, 1 PM at the Mt. Etna Trailhead.
Monthly Board Meeting 7 PM at the Grannas Station

More details on all events on page 3 of the *Trekker*
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!

Rails-to-Trails of Central Pennsylvania, Inc.
Post Office Box 592
Hollidaysburg, PA 16648-0592
814--832-2400

www.rttcpa.org



RAILS-TO-TRAILS, INC.
OF CENTRAL PENNSYLVANIA
P.O. Box 592
Hollidaysburg, PA 16648

Nonprofit Organization
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
Altoona, PA 16601
PERMIT NO. 66

Or Current Resident.