



Volume 25 Issue 5

Rails to Trails of Central PA Inc.

August September 2020

VOLUNTEERS:

Lower Trail would NOT EXIST without them! We have one of the most beautiful trails in the northeast United States. The Lower Trail is COMPLETELY RUN AND MAINTAINED BY VOLUNTEERS. The Board of Directors, the entire maintenance crew, and all committees are totally volunteer. As you can see by the pictures below there are all types of volunteers:



Patty Lambert, who you can barely see, is trimming overhead branches. Her horse Remi is patiently waiting as she cuts the branches away. Patty and a number of her friends help to keep the higher branches cleared allowing for horseback riders to ride on the grassy berm and not on the trail surface.

The Lower Trail is receiving greatly appreciated help from **Frankstown Township**. Due to the extreme flooding in 2018 and 2019 some of our drainage pipes under the trail between Flowing Spring and Gannister were totally blocked. We do not have the type of equipment required to make the necessary repairs. As you can see by this picture the pipe is a foot down and was totally buried. Rails to Trails would like to say **THANK YOU!!!!**, to **Frankstown Township** for coming to our rescue.



We do not have photos of all of our unsung volunteers. Many of you see our mowers out and working on the trail, or volunteers with chainsaws, weed-whackers, or volunteers working to remove invasive plants or planting trees and shrubs. There are also the ones you never see; writing grant applications, keeping the membership database organized, advising us financially or keeping all the records etc. These individuals are doing this to keep and maintain this wonderful trail. In the past month, you may have noticed our donation boxes are back, after having been vandalized last year. First, we would like to thank many of our members who contributed money to replace them. We next have to thank Keiths Trucking Service in East Freedom for custom making them at a greatly reduced price. These boxes are heavy grade steel and not easy to maneuver. We can thank member Bruce Sheehe for painting them and Ed Donahoe and Adam Grow for anchoring them into the ground. You may have also noticed that some of our gates are getting spruced up. This is thanks to Helen Yoder. She hauls gallons of water to scrub the gates, and then primes and paints them. Helen is great with a paint brush! In the past years you may have seen her painting the bollards at some of the road crossings.

We have many, many great volunteers who contribute what time and talents they have. We cannot say THANK YOU enough. If we did not have this group of talented people, this trail and organization would not have survived for the past 31 years.

With that said we would like to say a very special THANK YOU to **Gary Patterson and Jim Campbell**. These men have volunteered their time and talents for many years. Maintenance coordinator Mike Panek states, "these gentlemen have contributed greatly to making our Trail the success it is today. Many thanks to each for their service! I'm proud to have had the opportunity to work with them." These men leave very large shoes to fill. After 25 plus years, they deserve to retire and enjoy their families and the trail.

EXTENSION UPDATE:

We all thought by now that we would have had the grand opening of the extension between Flowing Spring Trailhead

and Canoe Creek State Park. The underpass is complete and the contractor has completed the Route 22 upgrade. You may ask what the problem is.

There has been a legal complication. An adjoining land owner, Stewart Merritts Jr, who originally sued PennDOT, is now suing not only PennDOT but Rails to Trails and Frankstown Township. Our attorneys assure us that it will all be cleared up and settled. The downside is that it is going to take time. So until this can be worked out, the grand opening is delayed. While the underpass is completed, the connection to Canoe Creek State Park is not officially open.

We will keep you posted.

TRIVIA QUESTION:

Can you identify where and when this photo was taken:



For the answer see page four of the Trekker.

WILDFLOWER WATCH: WILD BERGAMOT

By Bob Richers

Many of the wildflowers that I discover and highlight, are not found on the Lower Trails. Because we lack a diverse environment with open meadows and wide floodplains, but have mostly forest growth encroaching on an old railroad bed, some of the areas that have a wildflower potential get mowed. One of the exceptions that we have is Wild Bergamot. This abundant wild beebalm offers a showy display throughout July and into early August.



Bergamot is a member of the mint family. It is native to North America and quite abundant east of the Rockies and north into Canada. The plant has aromatic leaves and can be used to make a mild mint tea. In the past, the tea was used to treat colds, headaches, colic, low fevers, stomach aches, nosebleeds, insomnia, and heart issues. Oil from the leaves were used for treatment of bronchial complaints and other ailments. For seasoning, the leaves can be dried or, if

preferred, chewed raw. The flowers are also used for making tea.

On the trail, the local plant produces a white flower with a light purple tint. Other cultivated Bergamot has brilliant red, deep purple and maroon flowers. They grow in large ever-spreading clusters and need occasional thinning. They flourish in full sunlight to partial shade and make a delightful garden addition.

The plant is 3 to 5 feet tall with gray-green leaves. This perennial flower has multiple blossoms on open-branched stems. The flower is 2 to 4 inches wide, semi-round and almost looks like a cheerleader's discarded ragged pompom.

Hummingbirds, butterflies, honeybees, and bumble bees are constant visitors when Bergamot is flowering. I even have a hummingbird moth that visits the beebalm in my garden.

Beebalm can be started by transplanting root sections or by using seeds two months after the flower blooms. The seeds do not need to be winter stratified. When growing this plant in your garden, cutting and discarding the seed heads before their distribution will help contain it. It also helps to thin the plant's roots when needed, but at least every three years or so.

TREE OF THE MONTH: RED MAPLE

By Dave Despot

Red Maple (*Acer rubrum*) is a medium to large tree (40 to 70 feet) that is common in central Pennsylvania. Red maple is adaptable to a variety of sites from swamps to rocky ridges. In addition, this species is a favorite of homeowners who frequently plant red maple cultivars for their vibrant fall color. The range of red maple reaches from Nova Scotia south to Florida and west to Texas.



Leaves appear as three lobed, although they are sometimes described as five lobed – the lobes at the sides are greatly reduced drawing attention to the three central lobes. Sinuses are not nearly as deep as silver maple. Leaf color is dark green above with a whitened lower surface. A unique characteristic of red maple is that the central lobe has parallel sides or in some cases, sides that slope outward, resulting in a shape that resembles a keystone. Petioles are slender and may be red in color. Fall leaf color is often red but some trees exhibit yellow fall foliage.

Twigs are slender, smooth, and red. Small stems have bright gray bark, which, with age, becomes darker gray with shallow fissures, eventually developing dark scaly ridges. Buds are oval, red, about 3/8 of an inch long, and have 4 or less visible scales. Flower buds tend to be round, clustered at the ends of twigs, and enlarge in late winter. Flowers bloom in early spring and seeds develop quickly to be borne in May or June. Red maple wood is relatively heavy but is soft and lacks durability.

If we think about identifying maple trees, here are some hints that I rely on. Sugar maple and silver maple leaves are primarily five lobed. Red maple appears to be three lobed. Silver maple leaves are much more deeply lobed than red or sugar maple. Sugar maple bears its seed in the fall, silver and red maple bear seed in the spring. Red and silver maple buds look very similar – so in the winter, you need to look at bark characteristics to tell the difference.

ENJOYING THE TRAIL:

Last newsletter we had a picture of Bill Ward enjoying the trail with his son, granddaughter and great granddaughter.



This month Patty Lampert summited this photo of Karen Bascom enjoying the trail on her horse, Cocoa.

If you have a photo of someone enjoying the trail or a unique site along the trail please send it to us. You may just see it in an upcoming newsletter.

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT:

This summer WJAC TV were doing a series, "Road Trippin". On September 3rd they featured the Lower Trail. President Ethan Imhoff met with them on the trail. It was a wonderful segment. If you missed it here, is the link; <https://wjactv.com/news/local/road-trippin-pa-lower-trail> We hope everyone takes advantage of the beautiful fall season and gets out and enjoys the trail, whether it be biking, hiking, kayaking, fishing, photography, birdwatching, checking out the canal remnants, etc... . Remember in this very uncertain year it does everyone good to get outside.

COVID-19 UPDATE:

We are still asking all trail users to follow the CDC guidelines to prevent the spread of the Covid virus. This especially applies to social distancing while using the trail. There are still no programs being planned at this time.

SUPPORTING RAILS TO TRAILS IS AS EASY AS; SHOPPING AMAZON.COM.

Please consider using **Amazon Smiles** and **designating Rails To Trails of Central Pennsylvania Inc.** when you make a purchase through Amazon. This will provide our trail organization with a percentage of the purchase at no cost to you. Thanks to all those who have already used this feature.

You can use this quick link <http://smile.amazon.com/ch/25-1605920> to access Amazon Smiles using RTTCPA as donor recipient.

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E-mail _____

_____ New Membership _____ Renewal

_____ Individual	\$15.00
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_____ Supporting	\$50.00
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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Due to the COVID-19 VIRUS THERE WILL BE NO IN-PERSON BOARD MEETINGS. MONTHLY MEETINGS ARE BEING HELD THROUGH ZOOM MEETINGS.

Trivia answer: The photo is taken behind the power sub-station in Williamsburg during the building of the extension of the original 11 miles of the Lower Trail in 2004.

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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