Local schools visit Welkinweir

GVA offers Classroom and On-site Environmental Education programs for students in grades K-7 during the school year. Programs are designed to supplement school curricula by providing hands-on environmental study, incorporating problem-solving strategies and encouraging cooperative learning. This spring numerous elementary and preschool students enjoyed the variety of habitats and learning opportunities that Welkinweir has to offer.

To learn more about GVA’s Environmental Education programs for public, private, and home-schooled, please contact Dawn White. See additional photo on page 7.

Something is a’buzz at Welkinweir

A beehive, full of honeybees, has been installed in a garden at Welkinweir. The bees constitute a colony of survivor stock of mixed origins. (A colony of survivor stock is one that has the bee genetics to successfully overwinter in Pennsylvania.)

Mixed origins are crossbred subspecies of honey bees. Of the many different subspecies of honey bees, popular species for honey production include Italians, Russians, Carniolans, and Caucasians. Honeybees are all from Europe and like many other species of animals and insects, migrated across the Atlantic with settlers in the 1600s. Their names reflect their roots.

When people think of honeybee hives they tend to visualize a stack of white boxes. This style is called a Langstroth (Lang) Hive, named for its creator, the Reverend Lorenzo Lorraine Langstroth (1810-1895), a native Philadelphian.

If you visit Welkinweir and look for a hive of this type, you will enjoy a lovely walk around the property but you will never find the hive. The bees at Welkinweir are living in a Kenyan Top Bar Hive (KTBH).

Milestone regulation for watershed protection

On June 17th, by a 4-1 vote, the Independent Regulatory Review Commission (IRRC) passed a revision to Chapter 102 regulations mandating 150-foot buffers on streams that are designated as High Quality (HQ) or Exceptional Value (EV) for any new development in the Commonwealth. Chapter 102 – Erosion and Sedimentation Control – is a part of the Pennsylvania Code, under Title 25, Environmental Protection, Article II, Water Resources. The regulation still needs to go before the General Assembly for final approval after which it would take effect in January 2011.

GVA, and its partners in the PA Campaign for Clean Water and on the Buffers 100 sub-committee, have worked for over five years to create mandatory buffer regulation for the state. The member partners sought and received the support of 54 legislators and thousands of public support letters to the IRRC. The PA Campaign for Clean Water is a coalition of over 140 environmental, conservation, sporting, and religious groups from all corners of the state that support federal and state policies to protect and restore PA’s water resources. John Hoekstra, Watershed Advocacy Director for GVA, serves on the Steering Committee of the PA Campaign for Clean Water, selecting key issues to address through workgroups.

Protecting existing buffers of trees and plants be maintained along our state’s best streams is a smart, low-cost approach to preserving these important natural resources and the communities and businesses that depend on them. Buffers protect streams by reducing pollution and streambank erosion; providing food and shade for aquatic life; reducing flooding.

See “Milestone,” page 3
Our Mission is
to protect and preserve the quality and quantity of water resources in northern Chester County through advocacy and education.

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Beaver Run Basin and portions of French Creek awarded Exceptional Value status

In 2004, in response to a petition from Green Valleys Association, the PA DEP began the process of evaluating the Beaver Run basin and the lower French Creek basin from the confluence with Beaver Run, to the junction of West Vincent, East Vincent, and East Pikeland Township borders. This May the PA DEP made their final recommendation and redesignated 16.3 stream miles from High Quality, Trout-Stocking, Migratory Fishes (HQ-TSF, MF) to Exceptional Value, Migratory Fishes (EV, MF). The entire Beaver Run Basin has received EV status, as has the French Creek mainstem from Beaver Run to the Kennedy Covered Bridge just northwest of Kimberton. French Creek above Beaver Run had been redesignated as EV, MF in 1998, also in response to a petition from GVA.

Pennsylvania’s two Special Protection categories, Exceptional Value and High Quality, are awarded based on excellent biological health and water quality. In-stream sampling—that assesses both water chemistry and stream life—allows comparison between the conditions of the stream being evaluated to conditions of another similar stream that already has been identified as Exceptional Value. If the Total Biological Condition Score of the stream in question is 92 percent or greater of the score associated with the reference stream, it qualifies to be classified as "Exceptional Value.” Streams that fall within 83 to 91 percent are qualified to be classified as “High Quality.” Both the Beaver Run basin and French Creek mainstem received scores of 100%

Only 4% of Pennsylvania’s streams have been awarded EV status. Pennsylvania’s DEP grants Special Protection to prevent degradation of water quality and to protect all existing uses of the stream, such as warm- or cold-water fishes, recreation and potable water supply.

GVA’s 2004 petition included five unnamed tributaries to the French Creek which the DEP determined did not meet EV requirements. Of these, four will retain their HQ-TSF, MF status, and one stream will retain TSF, MF status.

Educating tomorrow’s environmentalists

Streamlines, our quarterly newsletter, highlights local and regional activities focusing on water resource conservation and preservation. If there are water resource issues you would like to learn more about through our newsletter, contact the office at 610-469-4900 or gva@greenvalleys.org.

Members of the Pottstown Environmental Club pose with one of two bluebird nest boxes they created and installed at Welkinweir. (See “Healthy Watersheds—Healthy Schools Programs” on page 6.)

Visit our Website: www.greenvalleys.org
Schuylkill Scrub

At left, employee volunteers from The John Middleton-Altia Corporation pose at River Park, Pottstown, with trash they removed from the Schuylkill River on May 15. The Corporation is one of the participants in the Schuylkill Scrub, a regional clean-up program for the watersheds of the Schuylkill River, funded by PECO.

Two streams in local watersheds named Wild Trout Streams

From PA Fish & Boat Commission

The Fish and Boat Commission at its April 2010 meeting approved the addition to its list of wild trout streams: Pigeon Run, a tributary to Pickering Creek, from the headwaters downstream to mouth; and Pine Creek, also a tributary to Pickering Creek, from the headwaters downstream to mouth near Historic Yellow Springs. It is the policy of the Fish and Boat Commission to accurately identify and classify stream sections supporting naturally reproducing populations of trout as wild trout streams. The listing of a stream section as a wild trout stream is a biological identification that does not determine how the stream is managed. The Commission’s Fisheries Management Division maintains the complete list of wild trout streams. The list is available online at: http://www.fish.state.pa.us/trout_repro.htm

Milestone, from p. 2

and flood damage; reducing the costs of stormwater management and of drinking water treatment; and lowering stream water temperatures.

While we celebrate this extra level of protection for our EV and HQ streams, a far greater number of stream miles in Pennsylvania without protective designations of EV or HQ still have no mandatory buffer requirement.

Bird banding intrigues campers

by Alex Swavely, Senior Counselor at GVA Summer Nature Camp

Summer at Welkinweir has once again brought natural beauty and educational opportunities to GVA’s Summer Nature Camp. The animals that were the focus during the first week of camp were the “Fantastic Flyers,” i.e., birds. The campers were able to see firsthand how birds interact and live in their natural environment. They learned about the different habitats of birds, how to identify various birds by call, built bird houses, and took part in educational hikes to learn about birds native to the area.

Doris McGovern led each age group of children in separate bird-banding activities. A metal band bearing a unique number is placed around the bird’s leg. The band stays on the bird for life. If a bird is caught again, it can be tracked by its number. Bird-banding is a way to track birds all over the world in order to better understand their migration patterns, diet, and habitat among other things.

Doris set up special “mist nets” next to bird feeders by the pavilion, and waited for birds to fly into them so that they could be captured, banded, and released. The children delighted in seeing wild birds close up. Campers got the chance to hold the birds, assist in the measuring and banding. Birds that were banded include a House Wren, a Tufted Titmouse, and a beautiful Goldfinch – the children looked on wide-eyed.

The excitement of the bird-banding lasted all week; the kids seemed to take more of an interest as their knowledge of the “fantastic flyers” grew. This is just one of the many memories this summer has created as we investigate what nature brings to us.
Community Nature Program

Summer Fun for adults and children

Fireflies!
Wednesday, July 14th or Wednesday, August 4th
7:30 – 9:00 p.m.
Discover the amazing lives of “lightning bugs” as we play a game to uncover the mystery of how and why fireflies light up, study the insects themselves, and make your own firefly to take home! Refreshments provided. Bring bug spray, a jar for catch and release of fireflies, and flashlights. Program is appropriate for ages 5 and up with adult.

Advance registration is required by 4:00 p.m. the day prior to each program. Please specify the date you are registering for. Programs are held at Welkinweir. Fee (adults & children): Members $5, Nonmembers $7.

Save-the-dates

The Annual Picnic and Meeting will be on Sunday, August 29th from 4-7 p.m. We will have the board election, yearly recap, a nature walk led by Education Director Dawn White, dinner, and dessert at the campfire. Look for more details in an upcoming mailing.

The Annual Celebration will be Thursday, September 23rd from 5:30-8:30 p.m. This event will be much like last year’s: it will be at our home, Welkinweir, at the estate house and each member of the GVA team will deliver brief highlights of what they have accomplished in the past year. There will also be a silent and a live auction!

We are seeking donations for the auction—collectibles, trips, use of vacation homes, dinners in or out, art, a few hours of your special talents, or any other ideas to make this a successful fundraiser. If you have something to donate, please let us know by September 1st. Please also let us know if you would like to volunteer on the Events Committee. Contact Harriet Stone: harriet04@comcast.net or 610-469-9050.

Volunteer for Green Valleys

Volunteers are essential for GVA to fulfill our mission, and we have many opportunities for individuals and groups to get involved. Just a few hours a month makes a big difference, and it’s a wonderful way to give to your local community!

We are currently seeking people interested in sharing their talents or skills on any of the following committees:

- Membership • Education • Advocacy • Events

For more information please contact Victoria Laubach at 610-469-7543 or victoria@greenvalleys.org.

Watershed Science Education

This fall, GVA in partnership with local high schools, embarks on a new water monitoring program in our watersheds. Laura Yayac, a 2008 graduate from the University of Delaware with an Honors B.S. in Natural Resource Management will be our Watershed Science Coordinator. We are thrilled to add Laura to the GVA Team.

This new program will accomplish several important goals:

- Provide water quality data to assist us in our mission of watershed protection;
- Engage school students as active citizens who improve conditions in our local watersheds now and in the future;
- Through reports and online data, engage our community in water quality issues.

This pilot program will be followed by similar programs in the areas of Invasive Surveys, NPS Survey, Stormwater Impacts, Missing Buffers, and Reforestation Potential. Near term we are focused on achieving EPA certification for our Quality Assurance Plan, forming partnerships for this fall, and identifying the best long term sampling sites to complement past studies.

Laura’s background includes an internship with the director of the Water Resources Agency that focused on water quality in See “Science,” page 6

Awards dinner held at Welkinweir

The East Nantmeal Historic Commission and Welkinweir co-hosted the Chester County Historic Preservation Network Awards Dinner on June 23, 2010. At the dinner, Estelle Cremers, long time GVA member and friend of former Welkinweir estate owners Everett and Grace Rodebaugh, was recognized for her contributions to the exploration of our area’s history. Cremers is the author of several books, including “30,000 Acres: Vincent and Pikeland Townships 1686 to 1850,” and “Coven-try, the Skool Kill District: A basic history of the three Coventry townships 1700-1850.”

Chester County Commissioners Terrance Farrell and Kathi Cozzone chat with honoree Estelle Cremers.
Grant-funded feasibility study for Welkinweir completed

In 2008 we were awarded a $5,000 Historic Preservation Grant from the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission for the design and engineering of a fire suppression system for the historic Estate House at Welkinweir.

The Estate House, formerly the home of GVA founding members Everett and Grace Rodebaugh, serves as the Association headquarters and is used for many fundraising events that benefit the Association. The 12,000 square foot building has sections that date from ca. 1750, 1830, and 1940. During the major renovation and construction of 1939 to 1940, the building was brought to a very high level of finish, including a Skinner pipe organ built into the main hall, whose notes grace many public events.

Recreating this building after a fire would be prohibitive in many senses. Therefore, since 1998 we have taken many steps to reduce the risk of fire, including replacing the heating system, upgrading detectors, rewiring most of the building, and coordinating with Ludwig’s Corner Fire Company. We also recognized the need for a system that will respond immediately should a fire break out.

The challenge of a fire suppression system design for Welkinweir is that there is no pressurized water available. Any fire suppression system must have its own water source – water storage cisterns and pressure-producing devices. Retrofitting a fire suppression system into a historic building means evaluating each historically significant space in the building for the selection of the best-suited fire sprinkler system and insuring that the pipe routing, sprinkler head type, style, color and location are implemented to have the least impact on the historic fabric and visual integrity of the building.

Carnevale Eustis Architects and Urban Technologies completed our report this spring. Two different systems meet our requirements: a NFPA 13 sprinkler system which is the most popular system, and the latest technology of Micro Mist, which uses much less water, causes less water damage, and may produce better results. The systems are designed to conform to the requirements of codes and ordinances. Piping will be run in existing vertical chases to conceal it as much as possible and emitter devices will be coordinated with existing architectural elements.

We would like to thank the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission for funding this study. We will be seeking funding to implement the recommendations made in the report that will help to preserve this wonderful community asset.

Observations

Kim Oellerich, Curatorial Fellow

My first two months as the Curatorial Fellow have been very busy. Initially I focused on maintenance in the Barn Ruins and on Azalea Lane, re-doing the Children’s Garden and preparing the grounds for numerous spring events: EnviroFest, Mother’s Day Tea, weddings, and house and garden tours. If you visit Welkinweir, be sure to check out those gardens which now contain lots of interesting plants, and also a vegetable garden, composting area and honey bee hive at the Children’s Garden.

In May I spoke at the Henrietta Hankin Library about the use of native plants in the home landscape and other sustainable practices including composting, turf management and water conservation. Over the last few weeks summer horticulture interns Alex Swavely and Austin Deputy began helping me work on the grounds. Together we have answered lots of questions and given tours to visitors, worked on pruning trees and shrubs in the arboretum and removing invasive plants. Since my arrival I have been learning a lot working on the grounds and speaking with the other staff members. I hope to further improve the arboretum’s landscape and collections during my time here.

Garden finds: Squawroot

This spring the Welkinweir horticulture staff was surprised to find a plant called squaw root, Conopholis americana, growing in the Hillside Garden in front of the Estate House. Squaw root is a native parasitic plant that gets its nourishment from the oak roots that it prefers to grow on, however it does not actually harm the tree. The plant, which resembles an upright cone, has scale-like leaves that give way to small, yellow-colored flowers from May to June. Squaw root was also seen blooming along the woodland paths on the other side of the pond in early May. After flowering, the plant turns a dark brown color forming stands of what appear to be burnt pinecones. It is part of the Orobanchaceae family (also known as the broomrape family), which contains parasitic plants such as beech drops (Epiphegus virigniana) and one-flowered cancerroot (Orobanche uniform).
Healthy Watersheds – Healthy Schools programs wrap up successful year

GVA’s partnership with two Owen J. Roberts Elementary schools, a Downingtown Area Elementary school, the Pottstown Middle School, and the Phoenixville Area Middle and High Schools strives to educate and encourage students about the environment. Students involved with the GVA programs in these schools participated in a variety of activities focused on environmental awareness and protection.

GVA could not have provided such needed programs without funding from The Phoenixville Area School District, The Macadam Company, Inc., and an anonymous donor.

Thank you to:

- Phoenixville Area Middle School Students, Devin Gervasi, Tori Ganter-Kelley, Trey Romance, Omer Odemis, and David Coffman for volunteering their time to trim and clean up the trails and flower beds at Welkinweir.
- Beth Intoccia for her donation toward our educational supplies.
- The Kate Svitek Foundation for their $1,000 contribution which will fund guest speakers and programs at Camp.

Buzz, from page 1

This style of hive is cheap to build and simple to maintain, however it is infrequently seen in the U.S. and Europe, because it does not easily lend itself to the production and extraction of honey.

The hive at Welkinweir is for observation and education purposes only and is not intended to produce any hive products (wax, pollen, honey, etc). Thus, a KTBH is perfect for this location. The hive is managed exclusively by beekeepers Linda Swyderski and Keith D. Brian of Four Magic Acres, Ludwigs Corner.

If you are interested in learning more about bees and beekeeping, many avenues are available to you. PBS has two great programs which can be viewed free, online from www.PBS.org: WGBH Boston’s Nova [01/04/00] Bees—Tales from the Hive, and WNET New York’s Nature [10/28/07]—Silence of the Bees. Want to talk to a beekeeper? The Chester County Beekeepers Association has one of the most popular and well-attended beginner beekeeping classes in the state. Information at www.ChesCoBees.org.

Where is the Welkinweir hive? I’m not going to tell you, but I have given you enough clues that you can find it when you visit. A tip for when you find the hive: you can safely view entrance activity from the south side of the mesh fence because you will be out of the traffic lanes. (The entrance to a hive is like the on-ramp to a turnpike: field staff are just buzzin’ on by with little regard to anyone or anything in their path!) Warning: watching hive activity can be addictive – bring a comfy chair!

Science, from page 4

the Delaware River Basin and in local streams, which solidified her interest in water resources. She has worked as an environmental educator, teaching young people about a variety of topics in the natural world. In addition to developing GVA’s Watershed Science Education program, she runs the Lionville YMCA program Earth Service Corps, an environmental service learning program for middle school and high school students.

Laura enjoys working with and educating youth about the natural world, and is excited to begin this program. Connecting students and adults to their local environment and teaching them about water quality links her interests and experience and provides a chance to create a hands-on learning opportunity and public resource.

Visit our Website: www.greenvalleys.org
Why they come back

Counselors reflect on their Summer Nature Camp experience

GVA is fortunate to have many camp counselors who return year after year. This season, out of 17 staff, 11 are “veterans,” having worked at camp for three or more years. As they begin another summer with us, we asked the counselors to reflect and share why they return to work at camp. Below are a few of the staff’s responses, in their own words.

Taylor Ashburn, Junior at Alvernia University, majoring in Criminal Justice
7th year Camp Counselor

“It has been the greatest experience I have had as a camp counselor. The camp offers many activities and games and has some pretty cool hiking paths which the kids seem to enjoy. I love working with the staff that has been here for a few years and have become some of my closest friends. But I believe the main reason I return each year is to see the excitement and joy the children experience at the camp.”

Chris Zadroga, Senior at East Stroudsburg University, majoring in Sport Management, minor in Business Management
5th year Camp Counselor

“I really enjoy coming to work every day and teaching the kids about nature and what it has to offer. I continue to come here because I love the experience that I get from teaching kids and learning about their interests.”

Matthew Younker, Junior at Temple U, majoring in Electrical Engineering
3rd year Camp Counselor

“These past years as a counselor have been an amazing experience and I have learned a great deal along the way. When I first started here I was surprised at how wonderful the staff was and how beautiful the property was kept. The reason I keep returning is because of the importance of spreading education of nature to younger generations. As a child I spent my summers being exposed to nature through a variety of programs and I enjoyed every second of them. The quality of the nature experience and education given at Green Valleys is like nothing else.”

Vince Marino, Senior at The Hill School
5th year Camp Counselor

“I return to camp because I enjoy being in nature. I feel like I am making a difference for the future by teaching kids the proper way to care for the environment. I love working outside and I also enjoy working for a non-profit organization with a good cause.”

Leigh DePaolis, Sophomore at University of Delaware, majoring in Environmental Science
4th year Camp Counselor

“I continue to return to Green Valleys because it offers work experience relevant to my major, as well as the important and rewarding experience of educating a younger generation about nature.”

There’s a place for you

Spaces are available in all 8 weeks of Nature Day Camp.

GVA’s camps are designed to engage children in fun and educational outdoor activities in order to foster a better appreciation for the natural world. Weekly activities include nature walks, guest presentations, educational games, craft projects, and self-discovery through nature play and exploration of the 197-acres of forest, meadows, ponds, and streams at Welkinweir. For a brochure visit our website or contact us via phone or email.

Please help send a child to Summer Camp

The Summer Nature Camp Scholarship Fund provides a week of camp to children from families who cannot afford to send them. Currently there are six children on the waiting list for camp scholarships. Generous donors can make a $175 tax deductible contribution to provide a child with a week of education and fun—though any amount is appreciated. If you would like to help send a child to camp, please contact us or mail your donation to GVA, Summer Camp Scholarship Fund, 1368 Prizer Road Pottstown, PA 19465.
Please join us . . .

Join GVA or Renew Your Membership Today!  *ONLINE MEMBERSHIP now available!

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☐ I would like to volunteer time to GVA.

Dues and contributions are tax-deductible. Green Valleys Association is a registered charitable organization. A copy of the registration and financial information is available by calling 1-800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.

Make checks payable to Green Valleys Association and mail with Membership Form to 1368 Prizer Road, Pottstown, PA 19465. Visa/MasterCard accepted—please call office.

BASIC MEMBERSHIPS  ☐ Check if this is a gift membership

Basic Membership includes quarterly newsletter, notice of events and programs, access to Welkinweir grounds, reduced rate to special programs (including summer environmental camp) and fishing with a GVA permit.

☐ Supporter .......................................................... $50.00
☐ Naturalist ............................................................ $100.00
☐ Environmentalist ............................................... $250.00
☐ Protector ............................................................. $500.00
☐ Preservationist .................................................. $750.00
☐ Steward .............................................................. $1,000.00

SUPPORTING CONTRIBUTION
☐ Friend of Welkinweir .......................................... $25.00

FISHING PERMIT
☐ Welkinweir Fishing Permit .................................. $5.00

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