

MFA NEWS



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE MICHAUX FOREST
ASSOCIATION

Editor: Judy Prescott
Web Master: Deb Rosevear

Fall 2022

www.michauxforestassociation.com



President's Column
Lyle Herr

Fall is here and the Michaux is showing off...bursting with color and wildlife activity as cabin owners and native forest "residents" get ready for colder weather.

It's been a very busy year for the MFA! We made and sold T-shirts, solitary nesting bee boxes and screech owl boxes. We had

a great time celebrating the association's 75th annual General Membership Meeting, where over 100 members enjoyed live music, corn-hole games and a silent auction, in addition to some great picnic food. We had a MFA stand again at Fall Fest in the park this year where we sold crafts and T-shirts and gave away wildflower seed packets to our members. This Spring the MFA joined forces with GIANT Foods, Friends of Pine Grove State Park and Cumberland County Juvenile Probation in the Mountain Creek Project, which is rehabilitating the Mountain Creek banks from the foot bridge at Fuller beach to the foot bridge at the entrance to the park and beyond. A big thank you to our partners, our many volunteers and our project coordinator, Tom Reidenbaugh. Speaking about volunteers, thanks to all those who picked up trash this year along Pine Grove Rd under the direction of Bob and Diane Shenk...another MFA project!

We also joined a Task Force, coordinated by DCNR, which has been meeting to address issues surrounding new Leased Campsite Regulations. As president, I was one of three task force members who attended a meeting in Harrisburg with several high ranking members of the DCNR staff to discuss the uniqueness of cabins in the Michaux district and how that could impact any proposed guideline changes. Please keep up to date with this on-going process with updates on our website and Facebook pages.

Finally, I would encourage our members and all cabin owners to do your part in being good stewards of this beautiful forest. Educate yourselves about invasive plants, animals and insects. "Leave no trace" when enjoying activities in the park and the forest. Be aware of things you should and shouldn't do on your leased campsites to protect our environment and not only preserve it for future generations but in fact, improve it! We really can have a positive impact on our surroundings. The Michaux Forest Association is a great way to get started. Get involved... make a difference.

Membership Update!

The current membership year ends
December 31, 2022.
You will be receiving the membership flyer
in a separate mailing!

If you do not receive a notice a membership flyer can
be found at:

www.michauxforestassociation.com



Greetings,

As I have just finished my September inspections, I am typing this report at my beloved cabin in front of my fireplace with front door open enjoying the view over Laurel Lake. The fall foliage has just begun and there is a nice chill in the autumn air. I love this time of year! Being in the beautiful Michaux forest only magnifies my love of the Fall season. I am sure many of you share my feelings as well

Now, on to my report. As happy as I am that Fall is here, it seems that summer whizzed by faster than ever. My inspections kept me busy but were not overwhelming the last few months. The normal seasonal storms caused the share of havoc. There were several cabins that had substantial damage resulting from uprooted trees and snapped limbs. Quite a few driveways were washed out by heavy rains and numerous times I discovered blocked entrances from fallen branches and various debris. The positive twist is that mother nature provided many of us with plenty of wood for the winter season. I had a large dead oak break and fortunately missed my privy and hit a stubborn white pine which directed it away from my cabin. It was quite a mess to clean, but I am grateful for the ample firewood the oak will provide! All in all, most cottages, like mine, were spared any damages from this summer's storms.

During my inspections this summer, I am glad to report I did not discover any forcible unwanted entries into any cabins. Many times, I discovered open or unlocked normally secured

doors. Each time I notified the owners, there were no issues with break-ins. Generally, it was just a case of high winds and/or hasty retreats that the cabin dwellers did not secure doors properly. In addition, there were a couple questionable incidents concerning sheds, but I have not heard from anyone that actually had any items go missing. If you have any questions or concerns with my summer rounds, please feel free to contact me and leave a message and I will follow-up with you. I can be reached at 717-226-2949.

In closing, I want to thank our editor...Judy Prescott...for serving and helping with the MFA newsletter. I can say from my personal experience, she was a great help to me the past seven years. Judy, as well as all the MFA trustees and volunteers, spend countless hours making the organization a strong representative for the good of all its members. Many thanks to you all!

Happy Fall and Winter

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No Job Too Small



**What's Cooking in Cooke —
Issues Around the Neighborhood**
By Andre Weltman, Twp.
Planning Committee

As a reminder, Cooke Township ordinances, resolutions and other information are available on the Township's website www.cooketwp.org. Questions may also be emailed to cooketwp@kuhncom.net.

TOWNSHIP MONTHLY SUPERVISOR MEETINGS

Please feel free to attend Board of Supervisors meetings, usually held the first Tuesday of each month at 7:30 P.M. at the Township building. Your attendance and participation are always welcome. Before dropping by, check for schedule changes on our website or on the bulletin board outside the Township building front door at 1700 Centerville Road, Newville PA 17241 (along Route 233, three miles north from the State Park Office).

If a new issue is brought to our attention and is not on the agenda, action may need to be delayed until the following month's meeting. If you are considering attending a monthly Township meeting to discuss an issue, if at all possible please let us know at least a full week in advance (and absolutely no later than 36 hours before the meeting).

CONSTRUCTION PERMITS

Please remember that building permits are required in Cooke Township. In many instances work will also invoke the State-mandated Uniform Construction Code inspection process. Don't start any building work unless you have checked with the Township directly. This applies to all properties, including those overseen by the State Park or State Forest, and applies even to cabins that have been granted an exemption from construction inspections under the UCC-13 process as allowed by the PA Department of Labor & Industry (see our comments in the Spring 2019 MFA newsletter). Don't assume your contractor has taken care of this legal requirement – it is your responsibility to follow the law. Failure to comply can result in stop-work orders and fines.

COMMUNICATING WITH COOKE TOWNSHIP

Our tiny rural Township is staffed by part-timers. We do not have regular office hours, and are open by appointment only. The best way to reach Cooke Township is by email at cooketwp@kuhncom.net or less efficiently, leave a voice message at 717-486-8114. When leaving emails or voicemails, always please tell us if you are a seasonal cabin owner (and specify State Park vs. State Forest), and provide your Cooke address as well as relevant contact info to return your message.

TIDBITS

• **Improvements to Township Building:** Cooke was able to use funds from the American Rescue Plan to create a handicapped ramp with railings into the municipal building; while the main intent was to meet requirements to hold elections here, it also improves access

to monthly meetings. The funds also allowed us to buy a telephone for conference calls, scan and digitally store old township records, and fix the water system which has not been potable for many years.

• **Spotted Lantern Fly:** This imported pest, spreading across PA for several years, has now reached Cooke Township though still in relatively small numbers. We can expect a major increase after eggs hatch next Spring. We know it's here, but let's not bring even more lanternflies into Cooke nor transport them elsewhere. Please check vehicles before you arrive and before you depart so you can remove insect hitchhikers. See www.agriculture.pa.gov and similar official websites for information.

• **Traffic:** in response to cabin owners' complaints, we've added more speed limit signs on Old RR Bed Rd. and Old Shippensburg Rd. Also, we obtained permission from PENNDOT to put a "Hidden Driveway" sign on Rte. 233 northbound approaching the park's Ironmaster's Mansion, a dangerous spot for cars pulling out of the parking lot.

• **Road work:** In 2023 a focus will be continuing expensive work on Bendersville Road. Another mile will be resurfaced.

• **Fire bans signs:** On those rare occasions that emergency fire bans are required in Cooke, we try to notify everyone as best we can. Please be aware that there could be signs along the roads entering the Township announcing that open fires are not permitted. We also have an (incomplete) list of cabin owner emails. If you would like to receive notifications, please send your name, cabin address and email address to cooketwp@kuhncom.net. We will not share our email list with anyone nor send you "spam"!

Another successful year for Litter Patrol!

2022 was the 29th year that MFA volunteers collect trash on our section of Pine Grove Road from the Laurel Lake dam breast to the Pine Grove Furnace State Park office as part of the Cumberland County "Adopt-A-Highway" Program. Our great group of volunteers picked up a grand total of 24 bags of trash on our dates in April, June, August, and September. Special thanks to those who helped this year:

- Mark Colucci
- Patti and Jim Deppen
- Linda and Tom Reidenbaugh
- The Phillip Risser Family
- John Strine

The 2023 dates will be available early next year. If you are interested in helping, please email us at dlshenk@comcast.net with "MFA" in the subject line.

Looking forward to the 30th Year!
Diane and Bob Shenk



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**Friends of
Pine Grove Furnace
State Park**
*By Mary Soderberg,
Vice-Chair*

Some weekends are just better than others and this year's Fall Fest was one of those special fall weekends. The weather was good, the trees were colorful, and everyone was in the mood to get out and enjoy themselves. The good weather encouraged a record-breaking crowd of more than 8,500 people to turn out for the weekend festivities at Pine Grove. The main goal of Fall Fest is to encourage everyone to enjoy the park, but the end result is that it helps the Friends raise money for special projects while promoting education, conservation and recreation.

Some of this year's investments in the Pine Grove Furnace State Park include:

The Friends purchased a bicycle repair station to provide an easy option for visitors to fill their bicycle tires or make quick adjustment/repairs. The repair

station is located next to the General Store.

One of our more creative projects was to create two "see-through" transparent waysides to help explain the iron making history of Pine Grove. Our Chair, Andre Weltman, partnered with the park staff to design and build the two informational kiosks. One "see-through" transparent wayside at the Furnace shows the stone stack at the center of various buildings and machinery around 1883. A second "see-through" display at the east end of Fuller Lake shows the "old ore hole" when it was a functioning quarry in the 1870s.

We were proud to provide financial and volunteer assistance to the Eagle Scout project led by Carson Fahnestock. Carson, a member of Troop 190 in Grantham, worked with the park to come up with a budget, donations, supplies and volunteers to provide long overdue maintenance to the small log cabin at the end of Fuller Field. His plan included adding a rain gutter, replacing badly rotten logs along the bottom front of the cabin, repairing the chinking and staining the entire exterior. The resulting

transformation of this little log shack is pretty amazing!

In our effort to support the park's educational programs, we brought in Sandy Lockerman, a local bird expert, to offer programs about Saw-Whet Owls and Hummingbird banding and tracking.

The Friends purchased the supplies necessary to turn two telephone poles donated by First Energy into a footbridge near the center of the Koppenhaver Trail. But it was the team of creative, hardworking staff and volunteers who made it happen. This was a project that sounded simple, but the logistics of dragging two telephone poles through the woods and then lifting them across a stream was plain hard work!

Earlier this fall we invested about \$3,000 in replacement native trees and plants for the park. The Friends contributed \$2,000 to the MFA Mountain Creek Project to restore the natural streambank buffer along the creek. For National Public Lands Day, the Friends purchased shag bark hickory trees for volunteers to plant in the Organized Group Campground and native plants to plant along the trails.

As always, many thanks to the members of the Michaux Forest Association for the donations and volunteer efforts that you provide to both the Friends and Pine Grove Furnace State Park!

2023 with the Friends of Pine Grove Furnace State Park

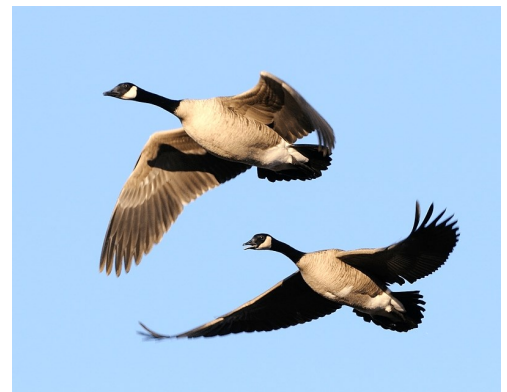
pinegrovefriends.org and Friends of Pine Grove Furnace State Park | Facebook

First Day Hike, January 1, 2023: Start the new year with a hike in Pine Grove Furnace State Park. Please check in at the DNCR event page or the Friends Facebook page in late December for this year's plans.

Earth Day, April 22, 2023: Celebrate Earth Day with a morning of volunteering and giving back to the park.

Iron Run and Charcoal Challenge Trail Races, June 10, 2023: Watch for more details regarding online registration for the 2023 trail races at <https://www.runreg.com/>

Fall Furnace Fest, October 21 and 22, 2023: A family weekend with food and craft vendors, entertainment and historical demonstrations. Saturday night will feature the annual pumpkin parade and the legend of the Hairy Hand.



Little Sausages at Mountain Creek

by Tom Reidenbaugh

No, we're not talking about Furnace Fest, though that can be pretty tasty. We mean the MFA project to clear out foreign invasive vegetation and replant with natives beside the stream, which has been ongoing since early last spring. Yum!

Many of you already know that MFA adopted the section of Mountain Creek from the footbridge at the Fuller Lake bathhouse upstream to the footbridge at the Brickyard area for natural restoration work on the streambanks, otherwise known as "riparian buffers." Thirty-five MFA and partner volunteers have worked a combined 350 hours and sent 20 truckloads of the bad stuff away to the State Park burn pile. The worst offenders have been woody thickets of privet, barber-y, and multiflora rose, along with gobs of entangling vines of honeysuckle and bittersweet, but there are others as well. In their place we've planted 27 native trees all over six feet tall, including sycamores, oaks, maples, hackberry, hornbeam, and river birch, and dozens of smaller donated shrubs and plants. Our expenses to buy the trees have been generously underwritten by grants from the Friends of Pine Grove Furnace State Park in 2022 (show your appreciation by supporting the Friends!) and by the Giant Company so we can expand upstream in 2023 (shop at Giant!).

So what's the deal with riparian buffers? In fancy terms they provide critical ecosystem functions absolutely necessary for stream health. The trees overhang and shade the stream, increasing its ability to hold dissolved oxygen. Think cold water species. Think brook trout. They pull car-

nitrogen and raises pH, making the soil better for it to reproduce, but decidedly worse for natives. And the thick leaf density of invasives traps humidity underneath, perfect for propagating ticks. Great. Never enough ticks.

What native plants do, and non-natives don't, is support food webs. Green plants are the primary producers, making sunlight into living tissue. All the rest of us need the energy from eating that plant tissue. A few higher animals graze it directly, deer, and they're doing just fine. The others – the birds, the fish, the amphibians, the reptiles, the small mammals – need to eat what eats the plants. Overwhelmingly these are the insects. They transfer energy up the food chain. And they're *not* doing just fine.

We're in the midst of a die-off so vast it's been termed the "insect apocalypse," where half the world's populations of insects have disappeared since 1970, and they're continuing to decline at a rate of 2½% per year. You've seen this yourself via the windshield test. On a drive as a kid it was splattered with bugs. Now, maybe a couple. The causes are many, unrestricted use of herbicides and pesticides, urbanization and land use practices, and loss of natural food sources. Not to be alarmist, but this is alarming. Life on Earth will change.

Unsurprisingly, this is also a bad time for bug eaters. The decline of insects is one reason North America has additionally lost three billion birds since 1970, 25% overall. The great majority of bird species, even seed eaters, need to nourish their young on insects. And not just any insects according to Doug Tallamy, world-renowned entomologist (bug guy) from nearby University of Delaware. Beetles, the most plentiful, have hard shells and sharp edges totally unsuited for stuffing down tiny gullets. He likens them to

"little tanks." The perfect ones are the caterpillar larvae of *Lepidoptera* (uh-oh, Latin word, means butterflies and moths), soft, juicy, and loaded with nutrients. He calls these "little sausages." It takes a truly staggering number of caterpillars to raise baby birds, 6,000 to 9,000 for a single clutch of chickadees. These simply aren't there if they don't have the right plants to eat.

We all know that monarchs need milkweed, but most insect larvae are similarly specialized to feed on only one or a few native host plants. This is the result of thousands of years of co-evolution, or according to your religious bent, mutual adaptation. Not wanting to be eaten, a plant develops chemical defenses for protection. An insect in turn gradually attains partial resistance, so that it can eat the plant. The plant makes more defenses, and the insect more resistance, and on and on, establishing a dynamic equilibrium of ever rebalancing between them, or the more things change the more they stay the same. This process is so intricate that the insect becomes specialized only to host plants that have shared the same geography with it for very, very long times.

When a foreign plant arrives, it does not bring its consumers from its home range. If the plant is a generalist with broad tolerance for environmental conditions and a prolific reproducer, it may quickly become invasive and aggressively crowd out native host plants. It outcompetes for available light, moisture, and nutrients. Add to that if deer find it unpalatable, we're off to

Little Sausages cont. page 6

the races. Preexisting food webs based on insects break down.

Dr. Tallamy and his students investigated the specialized feeding of caterpillar species on native versus non-native host plants. Native oaks are the true champions, supporting at least 557 species of caterpillars. Native cherries, willows, and birches all support over 400. Native wildflowers goldenrod and aster, over 100. And in this corner, the non-natives: Callery (Bradford) pear and burning bush, one each. Gingko and zelkova, exactly zero. Hence the reason why non-native plants are so favored in landscaping. Caterpillars here don't eat them. When they do chew on your native plants, Dr. Tallamy has a ten-step program to fix that: take ten steps backward, and it doesn't look near as bad.

Likewise for the stream, where tree leaves dropping in each fall form the basic plant tissue of aquatic food webs. Again we're fortunate to have world-class science next door, this time the Stroud Water Research Center near Kennett Square. They do a whole children's program in ecology called "Trout Grow on Trees." It shows how benthic macroinvertebrates (bug larvae who live under rocks) play the same role as caterpillars on land, ripping into and munching leaf packs, in turn transferring the energy up the food chain as they are eaten by fish (Side note: This is why you shouldn't play around moving rocks in the stream.). But guess what? They don't like foreign invasive plant leaves either, letting them to decompose by bacteria.

So what can you do to help at your cabin, in the Forest, and in the Park?
Fortunately, your MFA has its own five-step program:

1. Listen to a presentation by Doug Tallamy. All consider them eye-opening, some life-changing. Search any on the internet, or www.nwf.org/Garden-for-Wildlife/About/Resources/Natures-Best-Hope.
2. Clear out foreign invasive plants. If you want we'll identify 'em, but we won't dig 'em. That's your job.
3. Plant natives. If you've got lawn, convert some of it to natural vegetation. We're trying to help here too. MFA gave out free native trees last year and native wildflower seeds this year.
4. Care about the bugs. Never use Mosquit* Jo*, bug zappers, or yard bombs that indiscriminately kill all insects, good and bad. MFA makes native bee nesting boxes to try to sustain them. You could get one.
5. Come out and volunteer at Mountain Creek. We'll be making little sausages!



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Little sausage. Pale tussock moth caterpillar munching native Jacob's ladder at Pine Grove Furnace State Park.



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