



Montour Preserve Newsletter



SUMMER 2010

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Sky Watch

July's The **New Moon** is on the 11th. **Full Moon** occurs on the 25th. The **Delta Aquarid meteor shower** peaks around the early morning hours of July 29th although it is possible to see these meteors between July 21st and August 23rd. This shower produces up to 20 meteors per hour at its peak under ideal conditions but, unfortunately, the near full to full moon will interfere with viewing this year. **Venus** shines bright but low on the western horizon during twilight. **Mars** is a dim orange spot to the upper left of Venus in the early evening and the brighter **Saturn** spends July closing in on Mars from the upper left.

August's **New Moon** occurs on the 9th. **Full Moon** is on the 24th. The Perseid Meteor Shower peaks in the late hours of August 12 and early morning of August 13. You can expect to see meteors from late July through August, but the highest numbers will be at the peak. Mars is all but faded from view near Venus at twilight low in the west. Saturn is sinking low in the west and will be difficult to see by the end of the month. **Jupiter** will rise in the east shortly after twilight and is prominent in the east-southeast by late evening.

In September the **New Moon** occurs on the 8th. **Full Moon** falls on the 22nd. The **Autumn Equinox** occurs only a few days later on the 22nd. From mid- to late September, **Mercury** puts in an appearance low above the eastern horizon about 45 minutes before sunrise. Regulus is the bright star just above it. Jupiter rises in the east at dusk and is shining high in the southeast by 11 p.m.

Summer Nature Notes

With the hotter days of summer, the pace of nature slows but there is still a lot of activity, especially on a smaller scale. Patrolling **dragonflies** zoom along ponds, streams and wet meadows as they reach the peak of their activity. By late summer and into early fall, the largest dragonflies, Green Darners begin to migrate following ridges south through the state.

Butterflies feed actively during these warm days, mating and laying eggs. The first **Monarch butterflies** appear in July, their spectacular orange-and-black wings fluttering over fields. **Fireflies** or lightning bugs reach their peak of activity in July, flashing their signal lanterns after dark in an effort to attract a mate, while fascinating children of all ages at the same time.

August brings a flurry of asters blooming as the first “wave” of **warblers** begins night flights south. **Barn Swallows** begin gathering in August in preparation for their early migration south for the winter. Shortening days in late August and September prompt shorebirds to make their way south also. Much less well-known is the nocturnal passage of many songbirds during September and October. These **night-flying birds** are sometimes silhouetted against the moon as they fly past on a clear night. Listen for their short nocturnal flight calls that indicate their flight. Watch the face of the full or nearly full moon with binoculars to see this unusual event.

July Programs

BUTTERFLY COUNT

Sunday, July 11

8:30 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Meet at Environmental Education Center

Hosted by: Central Susquehanna Valley Chapter of the North American Butterfly Association

It's time for a 2010 census of the butterfly kind. Across the nation volunteers are helping count numbers and species of butterflies in designated locations. You can volunteer to join members of the local chapter of the North American Butterfly Association to help survey butterflies on and around Montour Preserve. The annual July Butterfly Count gathers information on the range and population numbers of butterfly species. This is a great opportunity to get involved and learn about these beautiful creatures. If you would like to help with this year's count, plan to spend part of or all day outdoors with us. Bring binoculars and a field guide as well as water and a lunch. The butterfly chapter will meet at 2 p.m. if you would like to stay for its meeting.

WILD PHEASANTS IN NORTH CENTRAL PA

Wednesday, July 14

7-8 p.m.

Environmental Education Center

Presented by: Colleen DeLong, Pheasants Forever Biologist

And Keith Sanford, PA Game Commission Land Manager

Hosted by: Chillisquaque Limestone Watershed Association

For two years now, wild pheasants released in Columbia, Montour and Northumberland Counties have had a chance to establish wild populations. Biologists have been monitoring the progress of these pheasants. Join us for an update on the central Susquehanna pheasant recovery program. You will also learn about the importance of the Crop Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) to pheasant recovery. There will also be an opportunity to hear about options for re-enrollment in CREP.

NATURE SKETCHING

Saturday, July 17

10 a.m. to noon

Meet in Environmental Education Center

Presented by: David Hughes, Art Gone Wild

Would you like to make quick sketches of plants and animals to document your outings or for later reference? If so, then artist David Hughes will show you how to form a sketch capturing important details and how to add a bit of lighting to the image. We'll begin indoors, but will move outside to practice what we learn. Recommended for ages 8 years old and up.

WILDFLOWERS OF FIELD AND MEADOW

Saturday, July 31

9:30 -11 a.m.

Meet in Environmental Education Center

Presented by: Jon D. Beam, Senior Naturalist

The summer sun brings splashes of color to fields and meadows in the form of wildflowers. These sun-lovers add their beauty to the summer landscape. Many provide food and shelter for a variety of insects and even some birds. Join us for a leisurely stroll along the trails to explore the identity, natural history and folklore of summer wildflowers. We'll also explore the role wildflowers play in the local ecosystem. Dress for the outdoors and a walk at an easy pace.

August Programs

PENNSYLVANIA HUNTER-TRAPPER EDUCATION COURSE

(Three-part course)
Tuesday, Aug. 3
Thursday, Aug. 5
6-9 p.m.
and
Saturday, Aug. 7
8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
Environmental Education Center
Advance Registration Required
Course Instructors: Pennsylvania Game Commission Officer,
Montour Preserve Staff and Volunteer Instructors

This three-session course is designed to produce safe, responsible and knowledgeable hunters and trappers. It includes instruction in basic techniques plus a host of hunting, trapping and outdoor skills designed to enhance a new participant's knowledge and enjoyment of wildlife and our hunting and trapping heritage.

Beginning and experienced hunters and trappers are welcome. Participants must be at least 11 years of age to enroll in a course and must attend all three sessions to qualify for certification. Adults are encouraged to attend with their children.

Please register early because space in this course is limited. To register go to <http://www.pgc.state.pa.us/> and find the hunter education calendar. If you don't have Internet access, call 570-437-3131 with the name, address, birth date of participant(s) and a contact phone number.

Note: Pennsylvania's Game and Wildlife Code requires all first-time hunters and trappers, regardless of age, to attend and successfully complete this course.

WOODLAND INDIAN HISTORY THROUGH ART

Friday, August 13
7-9 p.m.

Environmental Education Center
Andrew Forsythe, Sioux Specialties

Learn about the 18th century history of Eastern Woodland Indians through the detailed artwork of native Pennsylvania artist, Robert Griffing. His paintings accurately depict early state history, particularly the French and Indian War, Pontiac's War and the Revolutionary War eras. Using Griffing's paintings as a window to the past, Andrew Forsythe of Sioux Specialties will discuss Woodland Indians and their early history. He will also display a variety of Native American articles and attire that provide insight into the culture of the original inhabitants of Penn's Woods.

BAT CHAT

Saturday, Aug. 21

2-3 p.m.

Environmental Education Center

Presented by: Jon D. Beam, Senior Naturalist

Bats account for more than 25 percent of all the mammals in the world. They are the only mammals that can fly. Many people don't like bats for one reason or another, yet bats are critical to our existence. Bats are in real trouble and some bat populations are rapidly declining. Join us to learn about how bats make their living and interact with humans. You'll also learn about the problems affecting bats and the impact this could have on us.

September Programs

MARVELOUS WILD MUSHROOMS OF PENNSYLVANIA

Saturday, Sept. 11

1:30-3:30 p.m.

Meet in Environmental Education Center

Presented by: Bill Russell, author

Prompted by rainy weather, mushrooms seem to pop up overnight in gardens, fields and forests. Some are colorful, others drab. They grow in a variety of fantastic shapes and can be difficult to identify. Bill Russell, author of "Field Guide to Wild Mushrooms of Pennsylvania and the Mid-Atlantic" will help unravel the often confusing world of mushroom identification. The program will begin indoors with a slide show on wild mushrooms of Pennsylvania. Then we'll head outside to look at mushrooms growing on site.

BUTTERFLY DAY

Sunday, Sept. 12

1:30-3:30 p.m.

Environmental Education Center

**Presented by: Central Susquehanna Valley Chapter
of the North American Butterfly Association**

Join us as we celebrate the beauty and grace of butterflies with a variety of activities for all ages. We'll begin indoors with a presentation on Monarch butterflies and their life cycle. We'll also tag and release some monarchs. We'll take a walk to the butterfly garden and end the afternoon with a craft just for kids. This should be a great afternoon for the entire family.

CAMPFIRE TALES
Saturday, Sept. 25
7-8 p.m.
West Branch Group Camp Area
Presented by: Jon D. Beam, Senior Naturalist

Come, gather around the campfire to listen to stories from far and near. There will be tales of mystery and tales of humor. You'll hear tales of people and tales of animals. There will be a fair share of folk tales and tall tales alike. Join us around the campfire for an age-old tradition of teller and listeners. For your comfort, we suggest that you bring a folding chair or blanket. Don't forget the marshmallows. If the weather does not cooperate, we will meet in the Environmental Education Center.

Directions: To reach the West Branch Campground from Route 44 in Exchange, turn onto Muncy-Exchange Road and proceed about 1 mile. Turn right onto the gated, gravel road across from Betz Road and follow it to the parking area near the end.

Around the Preserve

Summer hours: The Visitors Center will be open daily through mid-September from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Pavilion reservations: If you would like to rent a pavilion for a family gathering, reunion, or other event you can do so on-line by going to the following website, <http://www.pplweb.com/montour+preserve/reservations/reserve.htm> or by calling 1-800-354-8383.

Nature Feature

They're Everywhere!

Today I was reminded of an old radio spoof from the 1970s about the feathered crime-fighter, Chickenman. The tongue-in-cheek (or should that be *beak*) show's famous catch phrase was, "He's everywhere! He's everywhere!" Even though I hadn't encountered a feathered superhero, I did have multiple wildlife encounters. They were with chipmunks. They certainly were everywhere. Chipmunks were searching for food in the leaves. They were chasing one another. They ran away from me; they ran toward me. Some were among the rocks along the creek. Others were on logs or stumps. Some were "chipping". Others were "chocking" They were in twos and threes and fours. They were, well...everywhere!

The eastern chipmunk is a small member of the squirrel family that spends most of its time on or under the ground. During the winter they take refuge in their underground burrow, but emerge each spring to find a mate and search for food. They spend their above-ground time searching for food, guarding their territories and raising young. Like their larger cousins, gray squirrels, chipmunks eat acorns, nuts, seeds, mushrooms, fruits, berries and corn. They also eat insects, bird eggs and snails. In turn, they are food for hawks, snakes, weasels, foxes, coyotes, bobcats, and raccoons.

Although their burrowing can be a nuisance around buildings, in the forest, chipmunks serve to aerate the soil and mix fresh organic matter into it. This benefits forest plants. Chipmunks also help to disperse plant and tree seeds as they gather and store food. On the other hand, they do eat bulbs, fruits and vegetables from gardens.

Chipmunk populations, like those of other rodents, rise and fall over time. Environmental factors such as food availability, seasonal weather conditions, predation, diseases and parasites all have an impact on these ground squirrels. These population fluctuations can be widespread or more localized in their extent. Last fall's nut and seed crops here at Montour Preserve were plentiful. Lots of food means better survival. Winter's rather abrupt halt in March also had a positive impact on chipmunk survival. Chipmunks can produce four to five young in the spring. By now young chipmunks have joined their parents in foraging outside their burrows. It's no wonder that chipmunks seem to be everywhere.

As you walk through the woods this summer and you hear a rustle in the leaves nearby, stop for a look. It might be a chipmunk foraging for food. Or there could be one perched on a dead log watching you very closely to determine if you are a threat. A chipmunk just might be peaking out of a hole alongside the trail, waiting for you to pass before it comes out. One might run for cover among a jumble of rocks to hide from you. You probably won't have to look far to see a chipmunk. They're everywhere! They're everywhere!

Jon D. Beam
Senior Naturalist