



Montour Preserve Newsletter



SUMMER 2011

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Sky Watch

July's **New Moon** is on the 1st. **Full Moon** occurs on the 14th. 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 is better from the southern hemisphere but we could still see a few meteors from our location. On the evenings of July 6-8, the **waxing Moon** passes below **Saturn** and the bright star **Spica** in the west-southwest shortly after dark. Look for the beautiful **Milky Way** pouring across the sky from high in the east.

August's **Full Moon** is on the 13th. **New Moon** occurs on the 28th. 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. Unfortunately, light from the full moon will hide all but the brightest meteors. The waxing **crescent moon** will pass under **Saturn** and **Spica** about one hour after sunset on August 2-4 in the west-southwest. **Jupiter** rises in the east around 11 p.m. and shines brightly after midnight. It stands very high in the south by dawn.

In September the **Full Moon** falls on the 11th. **New Moon** occurs on the 27th. The **Autumnal Equinox** occurs on the 23rd. From mid- to late September, **Mercury** puts in an appearance low above the eastern horizon about 30 minutes before sunrise near the bright star **Regulus**. **Jupiter** rises in the east-northeast about 2 hours after sunset and dominates the eastern sky most of the night.

Summer Nature Notes

The hotter days of summer slows the pace of nature 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 10

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 to chase butterflies. Across the nation volunteers are helping count numbers and species of butterflies in designated locations. Why not volunteer to join members of the local chapter of the North American Butterfly Association and 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. to share results if you would like to stay for its meeting.

WILD PHEASANTS IN NORTH CENTRAL PA: AN UPDATE

Wednesday, July 13

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 three 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.

***BATS OF PENNSYLVANIA:
NEW THREATS TO OUR LOCAL SPECIES***

**Saturday, July 16
2-3 p.m.**

**Meet in Environmental Education Center
Presented by: Amanda Jenkins, College Intern**

Small creatures of the night, bats often go unnoticed as they fly silently through the air. Many people might not have noticed the increasing scarcity of these winged hunters in our night skies in recent years. There are several new threats to different species in Pennsylvania as well as species across the country. New technologies have had a tremendous impact on their survival. Disease has also been devastating to the population. Join us as we explore different bat species native to this area and learn about the challenges they face in their everyday lives.

INTO THE PAST

**Saturday, July 23
1:30-3 p.m.**

**Meet in Environmental Education Center
Presented by: Jon D. Beam, Senior Naturalist and Amanda Jenkins, College Intern**

What was life like here in Montour County in bygone days? Who lived here? How did they make a living? Join us for a step into the past to explore days of yore. Through old photographs and historical documents we'll create a window into bygone days. We'll discuss Native Americans, early settlement, take a look at the Bitler homestead and how Montour County has changed through the years.

JERRY HAINES IN CONCERT

**Sunday, July 24
2-3:30 p.m.**

**Environmental Education Center
Presented by Jerry Haines, singer-songwriter**

Join us for an afternoon of acoustic music, folk ballads, humorous songs, and good old time music. Pennsylvania singer-songwriter Jerry Haines will provide a delightful

musical program for all ages. This versatile performer returns to the preserve to mix vocals with guitar, harmonica, and autoharp. If you enjoy good old down-home music, bring the family and join us for an afternoon of toe-tappin' pleasure.

AT HOME IN THE WOODS: PLANNING FOR THE DAY

Saturday, July 30

9:30-11 a.m.

Meet in Environmental Education Center

Presented by: Fred Gast, Montour Preserve Supervisor, Jon D. Beam, Senior Naturalist and Amanda Jenkins, College Intern

TV survival shows demonstrate what to do in case you find yourself in an unexpected survival situation. Our program is designed to show you how to prepare so you don't end up in a survival scenario. We'll focus on preparing for the day in the Pennsylvania outdoors, essentials to carry in a kit on your outing and basic skills that can make your time outdoors more enjoyable. Join us for this first in a series. Feel free to bring your own essential items for a show and tell session.

August Programs

PENNSYLVANIA HUNTER-TRAPPER EDUCATION COURSE

(Three-part course)

Tuesday, Aug. 2

Thursday, Aug. 4

6-9 p.m.

and

Saturday, Aug. 6

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.

UNDER THE THUNDER MOON

Friday, Aug. 12

7:30-9 p.m.

Meet in Environmental Education Center

Presented by: Jon D. Beam, Senior Naturalist and Amanda Jenkins, College Intern

The Thunder Moon rises as the sun sets, casting its light across the evening landscape. Learn the other names of this Full Moon and how it got them. On our walk, we'll explore superstition and folklore about the moon. We'll also discuss views of the moon from different cultures and enjoy a leisurely evening stroll. Venture forth with us under the light of the moon to explore folklore and natural history of the nocturnal world if you dare. Dress for the weather and for a walk at an easy pace in the moonlight.

HERBS AND EDIBLES

Sunday, Aug. 14

2-5 p.m.

Meet in Environmental Education Center

Presented by: Robert Brown, cooking instructor

Healthy and creative cooking starts with the flavorful use of herbs and spices. Join cooking instructor Robert Brown in Montour Preserve's Herb Garden for an outdoor afternoon of tips on cooking with and cultivating herbs. Topics will include growing your own herbs, preserving and drying herbs, making herb-infused vinegars and oils, and summertime recipes.

YOUNG EXPLORERS: PONDS

Ages 3-5

Wednesday, Aug 17

10-11 a.m.

Meet in Environmental Education Center

Presented by: Jon D. Beam, Senior Naturalist

Advanced registration required — call 570-437-3131

Join us for an exciting look at ponds. We'll start off with a storybook about a pond, then move outdoors for a closer look at the critters and plants that live in and around a pond. We'll look for frogs, turtles, dragonflies and cattails on a short walk around a pond.

September Programs

BUTTERFLY DAY

Sunday, Sept. 11

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.

BIRDS OF LATE SUMMER

Saturday, Sept. 17

9:30-11:30 a.m.

Meet in Environmental Education Center

Led by: Jon D. Beam, Senior Naturalist

As summer slips into autumn, many of our songbirds and waterbirds slip away as they start their journey south for the winter. Other birds tough it out by staying through the winter. Join us for a walk on the preserve to look at both resident and migratory birds. We'll explore several different habitats to discover who is moving through and who is staying put. Bring binoculars and field guide if you have them and dress for the weather.

CAMPFIRE TALES

Saturday, Sept. 24

7-8 p.m.

West Branch Group Camp Area

Presented by: Jon D. Beam, Senior Naturalist

Come, gather around the campfire and 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. We'll provide the fire, so 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 2 miles. 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

Lake Chillisquaque: A Self-sustaining Fishery

What exactly is a self sustaining fishery? This is a healthy body of water that can sustain both optimum growth and aquatic diversity naturally. Self-sustaining fisheries are an important aspect of a healthy environment. Not only fish but frogs, turtles, waterfowl and many other species benefit from a healthy aquatic ecosystem. Many lakes and streams throughout Pennsylvania must be stocked with fish by the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission to help keep a healthy and decent sized fish population. However, self-sustaining lakes and streams do not need to have any fish added to reach a favorable number.

Lake Chillisquaque is a 165-acre reservoir that was built in 1972. The main purpose of this reservoir is to act as a backup source of water for cooling purposes at the Montour Power Plant. The lake was stocked not long after it was constructed with catfish, bluegills, perch, walleye, crappies, muskellunges, northern pike and largemouth bass to help establish the fish populations before a prime breeding habitat became established. After the initial stocking of the lake only channel catfish fingerlings have been added on several occasions (1992, 1995, and 1996).

Several different types of cover have been added to the lake over the years to help improve the habitat. Structures such as tire reefs, sunken evergreens, cement blocks, and porcupine cribs help provide hiding places for smaller fish. These structures may also provide breeding spots for larger fish. Porcupine cribs are pyramid shaped structures built with wood. Holes or gaps are designed in the crib to help give smaller fish a place to hide. Cement blocks are used by larger fish as a spawning area. PVC devices and tire reefs are placed to give both large and small fish a place to hide. The addition of turtle basking structures help sustain the lake's turtle population to ensure a diverse array of aquatic species. All of these structures help improve the habitat for the fish and other aquatic life. With the improved environment the aquatic species can naturally sustain themselves at decent sized populations.

Largemouth bass fishing in Lake Chillisquaque is recognized statewide. The Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission has ranked the lake 27th out of 114 in the medium sized reservoirs and lakes category for the state. People fishing in the lake have noticed an increase in the size of their catches over the years. Biologist reports have supported these opinions.

Biologist surveys were conducted from May 12-16, 2003 and May 9-13, 2005 to monitor the populations and species in the lake. This was done to ensure the lake remained self-sustaining. In both surveys 40 trap nets were used as well as electrofishing. Between both surveys a total of 18 different species were found. Both the population and size of each species were noted. Many of the population numbers stayed relatively the same. However, the number of northern pike and walleye showed an increase. There was also a broader range of the sizes of individual fish between 2003 and 2005. This broader range indicates that the populations are successfully breeding and growing.

Lake Chillisquaque has been establishing itself since the initial stocking in the 1970s and is now a self-sustaining fishery. Fish populations in the lake remain at healthy balanced numbers. Due to the lake's ability to sustain itself in an ecologically healthy manner, everyone can continue to enjoy the great fishing here in Lake Chillisquaque's naturally sustaining environment for years to come.

For more information on the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission Biologist Reports, please visit: <http://www.fish.state.pa.us/afm.htm>

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