



# Montour Preserve Newsletter



Winter 2012



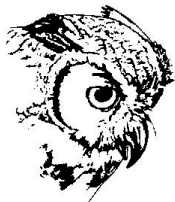
## Nature Notes



**Great horned owls** begin calling at dusk on cold winter days as males defend their territories and court females. By mid-February, female great horned owls will begin nesting.

January and February are good time to look for winter raptors. **Red-tailed hawks** and **American kestrels** hunt over open fields as do visiting **rough-legged hawks**. Smaller birds visit feeders on a regular basis this time of year and can attract accipiters like **sharp-shinned** and **Cooper's hawks**. Both specialize in catching and eating smaller birds. The concentration of birds at winter feeders provide these two accipiters with good opportunities for food when it is most scarce. The hawks are just taking advantage of an opportunity provided by us humans.

February brings the beginning of courtship and mating for some of our native mammals. **Mink** are actively seeking a mate beginning early in the month. Both **raccoons** and **groundhogs** become romantically active toward the end of February. Tracks in the snow and, unfortunately, roadkills are indicators that these animals are out and about at night. **Eastern chipmunks** also begin emerging from hibernation near the end of the month scurrying around searching for food and mates. One might show up at your bird feeders at this time if food is still scarce.



## Sky Watch



January brings a brief but intense meteor shower on the 4th. This **Quadrantid meteor shower** will be best seen between moonset and twilight (from about 3-6 a.m.) if skies are clear.

Look for the brightest of all winter constellations, **Orion**, the Hunter, in the southern sky. Above and to the right of Orion is **Taurus**, the Bull with its V-shaped face. The bright orange star, **Aldebaran**, forms the eye of the bull.

Look for **Jupiter** in the twilight in the west-southwest in January. It will be the first bright object you will see in the evening sky. **Mars** climbs into the eastern sky by 10 p.m. at the beginning of the month, rising earlier as the month progresses.

**Full Moon** occurs on Jan. 8 while 1st quarter is Jan. 16. **New Moon** is on Jan. 23 and first quarter is on Jan. 30. From Jan. 24-26, the crescent moon moves from below to above **Venus** in the west-southwest about an hour after sunset..



In February, **Orion** and **Taurus** continue to dominate the southern sky. Once again this month a crescent moon rises past **Venus** from Feb. 23-25. On the 26th it is just to the right of Jupiter shortly after dark.

**Full Moon** is on Feb. 7, last quarter Feb. 14, **New Moon** the 21st and first quarter is on the 29th.

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## MAPLE SUGARING PROGRAMS FOR SCHOOLS

Maple sugaring programs will be offered for schools Tuesday through Friday (except the first week), Feb. 22 through March 9. Schools and home school groups can contact Montour Environmental Preserve at 570-437-3131 to schedule a program. Registration begins **Jan. 3**.

Each maple sugaring program lasts about two hours. Program participants should be kindergarten age or older. Minimum group size is 10. Dress for the weather time outdoors.



### LEGENDS OF THE WINTER SKY

Friday, Jan. 13  
7:30-8:30 p.m.

Meet in Environmental Education Center  
Presented by: Jon D. Beam, Senior Naturalist

The hunter and his dogs face a charging bull. The great bear sleeps through the winter while a queen sits upon her throne. Stories from ancient times are still associated with patterns of stars in the night sky. Today we know these patterns as constellations. Join us as we explore the folklore, and identification of some common winter constellations. If the weather permits, we'll start indoors with a brief introduction and then go outside to explore the winter sky. If the weather does not cooperate, we'll spend our time indoors. Dress warmly and be prepared for a night walk outdoors.



### WINTER TREE WALK

Saturday, Jan. 21  
1:30-3 p.m.

Meet in Environmental Education  
Center Presented by: Jon D. Beam,  
Senior Naturalist

Winter is a quiet time for trees. They are leafless and dormant through the colder months. Without leaves they are more difficult and challenging to identify than during the summer months. Join us for a walk in

a winter woods. We will discuss how trees adapt to the cold of winter. We'll also explore tips and techniques for identifying some common trees using bark, twigs and buds. Dress for the weather and time outdoors.



### AT HOME IN THE WOODS: STAYING SHARP

Saturday, Jan. 28  
1:30-3 p.m.

Environmental Education Center  
Presented by: Jon Beam, Senior Naturalist &  
Fred Gast, Supervisor, Montour Preserve

Edged tools have been used by humans for thousands of years. Although they have become more refined through time, the knife and axe still do the same jobs today as they did centuries ago. Join us as we share information and experience in choosing the "perfect" outdoor knife. We'll discuss specific features, knife use, safety and care. We'll also take a look at another tool, the camp axe. We will have a variety of each tool to show and there will be live demonstrations on practical applications and safety.

### YOUNG EXPLORERS: WOODCHUCK WONDERS

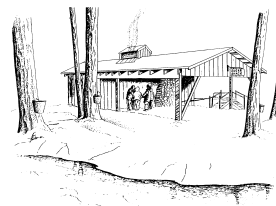
Ages 3-5

Advanced Registration Required  
Thursday, Feb. 2  
1:30-2:30 p.m.

Environmental Education Center  
Presented by: Jon D. Beam, Senior Naturalist



Join us to celebrate Ground Hog Day with a story and some fun activities. We'll explore the life of a ground hog and learn what this special day is all about. Please register by calling the preserve office at 570-437-3131 or email at: [pplpreserves@pplweb.com](mailto:pplpreserves@pplweb.com)



## MAPLE SUGARING OPEN HOUSE

Saturday, Feb. 25

Noon to 4 p.m.

and

Sunday, March 4

Noon to 4 p.m.

Environmental Education Center

Presented by: Preserve Staff

Programs begin on the hour (noon, 1, 2 and 3 p.m.) in our Environmental Education Center with a talk and film featuring the natural and cultural history of maple sugaring. Afterward, a short walk through the woods takes you to the Sugar Shack to experience the sights, sounds and scents of maple sugaring. Join us for this family experience and follow the sugaring process from sap to syrup. Scouts, 4-H and other groups are welcome to attend either day. Plan to arrive on the hour to enjoy the entire sugaring program. Outdoor demonstrations end at 4 p.m. Maple products will be available for purchase at the Sugar Shack. For your comfort, we suggest you dress for the weather and a short walk outdoors.

## DELIGHTFUL DULCIMER AFTERNOON



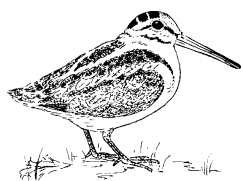
Sunday, March 18

2-3:30 p.m.

Environmental Education Center

Presented by: A.J. Bashore II

Celebrate the beginning of spring with the delightful sounds of dulcimer music. A.J. Bashore II will treat us to a mix of old-time, Celtic, Appalachian, contemporary and original music. What better way to chase away the winter blues than to enjoy a music-filled afternoon? This special performance promises to delight both young and old with the unique music of the Appalachian lap dulcimer.



## TIMBERDOODLE TIME

Friday, March 23

7-8:30 p.m.

Environmental Education Center

Presented by: Jon D. Beam, Senior Naturalist

It is dance time and you are invited to come and watch. This dance is unlike any you have experienced before. It is the unique courtship ritual of the timberdoodle (a.k.a. the American woodcock). An indoor talk will focus on the natural history and behavior of this unusual bird. Afterward, we will go outdoors to watch and hear the ancient song and dance of the "timberdoodle." Dress for the weather and be prepared to spend some time outdoors.

## SPRING JOURNALING

Saturday, March 31

1:30-3 p.m.

Environmental Education  
Center



Presented by: Jon D. Beam, Senior Naturalist

Spring is here and the signs of spring are all around. It's not just the first robin of the season that signals this change. There are many other natural events happening if you take the time to look and listen. Why not celebrate spring by starting a nature journal or adding to one you have started? Join us for a brief introduction to nature journaling and then a trip outdoors to explore the signs of spring and make some entries in your nature journal. Bring a journal or notebook and pen or pencil and plan to spend time outdoors.

*(Sky Watch continued)*

March brings a special astronomical event. For the first three days of the month you can see the six brightest objects in the night sky above the horizon at the same time. Look about 45 minutes after sunset to see, roughly from west to east: **Mercury** (low in the sky), **Venus**, **Jupiter**, **Sirius**, the **Moon** and **Mars** (low in the sky). All will remain visible until March 7 when **Mercury** begins to fade.

**Spring equinox** is on March 20. Spring officially begins in the Northern Hemisphere. March's **Full Moon** occurs on the 7th and last quarter on the 25th. It is near **Venus** on the 26th about an hour after sunset in the western sky.



Keep in touch with the weekly changes in nature by listening to WVIA-FM & PPL's "The Nature Notebook" broadcast on 89.9. This winter you can learn about winter ghosts, vertical worlds, space explorers and much more. "The Nature Notebook" airs at about 4:57 p.m. Sunday afternoons. Or you can listen to broadcasts online at: <http://www.pplweb.com/community+partners/nature+notebook/broadcasts.htm>.




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