



LEEPfrog



The Newsletter of the
Lutherlyn Environmental Education Program

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Cuckoo, Cuckoo by Todd Garcia-Bish

It will come as a surprise to most people that there are cuckoo birds in Pennsylvania. Although their call does not sound like their Eurasian cousins (who made the cuckoo clock famous), the yellow-billed cuckoos (*Coccyzus americanus*) are a great benefit for us to have in our forests.

The bird's anonymity stems from its ability to hide in the tree canopy. That is also where you will find the yellow-billed cuckoo's prey. They are one of the only birds that eat hairy caterpillars, like gypsy moth, tent caterpillars, and fall webworms. In fact, in years when there are larger populations of these pest caterpillars, you are much more likely to see a yellow-billed cuckoo. They also eat cicadas, katydids, grasshoppers, berries, and, from time to time, treefrogs.



Photo by Stephen Ramirez CC BY-SA 3.0

Yellow-billed cuckoos have only moved into Pennsylvania over the last 70 years, perhaps because climate change has lengthened our summers. They spend the winter in Central South America, migrating up to 5,500 miles, all at night.

Cuckoos do not mate immediately upon returning from South America. They wait until mid-June, when there are lots of caterpillars and other large insects around to raise their young. They need to have lots of food available because young cuckoos grow so fast. Amazingly, chicks that are born (continued on page 2)



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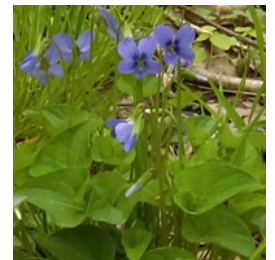


Notes from the Naturalists by Holly Schubert and Todd Garcia-Bish

Last spring we made it a point to take note of all five varieties of violets found at Lutherlyn. Four of them could be seen on the Chapel Rock trail in the same week! One other blooms a week later in a wetter location.



The dark purple flower in the bottom left is the common blue violet (*Viola sororia*); bottom right is the yellow forest violet (*Viola pubescens*); the light purple one in the upper right is the northern bog violet (*Viola nuphrophylla*); and the small white one in the upper left is the Canadian violet (*Viola Canadensis*).



The fifth (right) is the marsh blue violet (*Viola cucullata*) :

(continued on page 5)

Cuckoo Cuckoo (continued from page 1)

naked, are mostly covered in feathers within 24 hours. Seventeen days after the eggs are laid, the young are leaving the nest!

The yellow-billed cuckoos in the eastern U.S. have fared much better than their western relatives. Loss of habitat has led to the western cuckoos being listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act. It is a good reminder of how tenuously some animal species are clinging to survival. They are all depending on us to be good stewards of this planet.

Program Highlight: Maple Sugaring



We are entering one of the most exciting seasons on the LEEP calendar: Maple Sugaring season! For the last 25 years, we have been teaching thousands of people how to identify trees, hang buckets, and make maple syrup. It provides a wonderful entry into nature appreciation and creation care.

For 2020, we are replacing our evaporator pans with brand new ones, thanks to some generous donors. We will also be making improvements to the Sugar Shack and the gravel road that leads to it. These improvements will allow for many more years of making maple syrup.

If you would like to learn more about maple sugaring at Lutherlyn, join us for our Saturday Safari on March 7. If you would like to bring a school group, call or email us to reserve a field trip date.

Project Update: Universal Access Trail *by Todd Garcia-Bish*

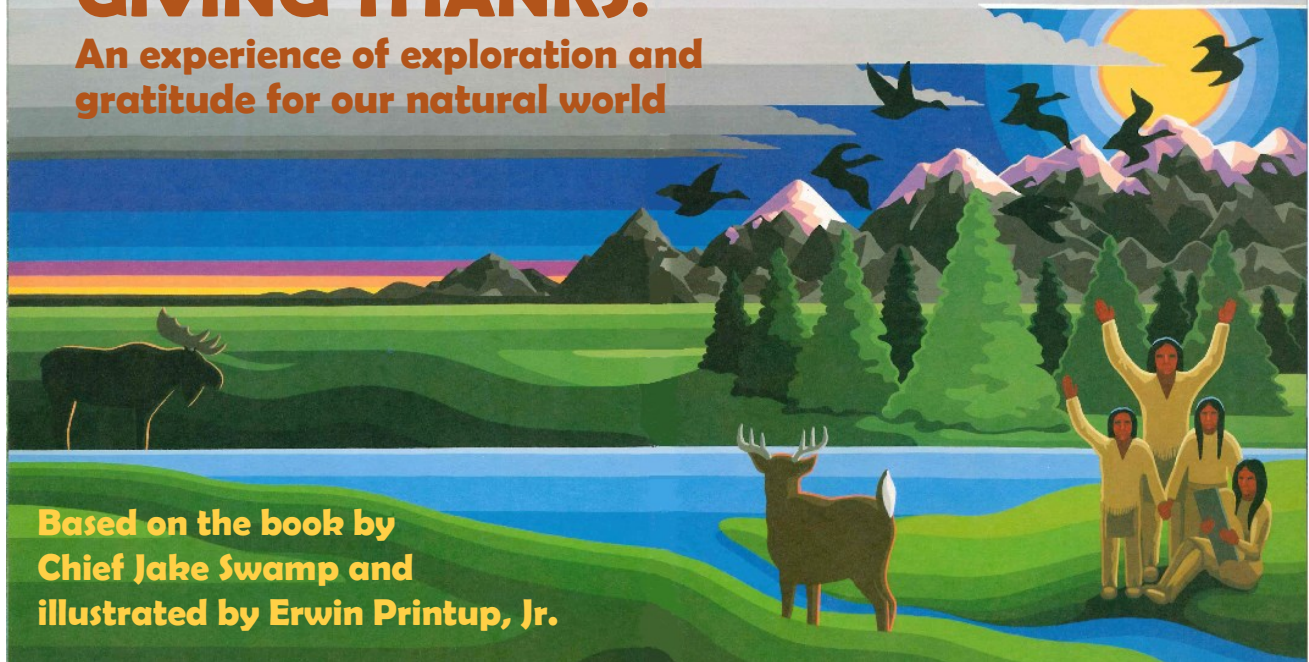
Our goal of creating a trail to the marsh that is “usable by all people to the greatest extent possible,” continues to progress. The first 36 feet of gravel path and twelve foot boardwalk were completed in the fall of 2018. This winter we have added another twelve foot boardwalk and are working on a third. These additional boardwalks have been added by Thrivent Action Teams. Materials for each boardwalk section can be purchased with the \$250 Thrivent Action Team funds and a small group of volunteers can construct a boardwalk in a day. The gravel portions of the trail can be constructed for about \$10/foot. We have about 34 more boardwalks to build and 930 feet of gravel to lay for completion.



Contact us: *Lutherlyn Environmental Education Program, Box 355, Prospect, PA 16052
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GIVING THANKS:

An experience of exploration and gratitude for our natural world



Based on the book by
Chief Jake Swamp and
illustrated by Erwin Printup, Jr.

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New Program Offering: Giving Thanks

To celebrate Native American Heritage month, we are inviting Kindergarten to 3rd grade classrooms to join us in November. The Giving Thanks program will focus on the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) tradition of being thankful for our natural world. It will include Native American games, a walk in the forest, and Native American stories. Group sizes will be limited so that we have enough indoor space for everyone. Please contact the LEEP office for more information.

Earthcare Corner: Recycling Glass



For the last 28 years, we have used the Earthcare Corner to help people make lifestyle decisions that are good for the planet. By and large, we have assumed that the people reading the Earthcare Corner were already recycling aluminum cans, plastic bottles, and glass. Most of us have even been able to comingle all of these in our curbside recycling for many years. Unfortunately, some of that is beginning to change as overseas markets for our comingled recycling disappear. Glass, especially, is being removed from the materials that some municipalities and waste haulers will recycle.

In response to reduced glass recycling, the Pennsylvania Resources Council (PRC) launched a glass-only recycling program in 2019. The program includes some permanent drop-off sites in Allegheny County and a schedule of “pop-up” glass recycling events throughout the region. Glass is in demand by several glass mills in PA and OH. These mills use recycled glass as their raw material for making new glass jars and bottles. A “glass-only” program works much better for them than your curbside recycling because curb-side glass is contaminated with all kinds of other materials.

For more information on PRC’s glass program, check out:

<https://prc.org/programs/collection-events/glassrecycling/>.

Archaeology Update: Digging for Answers by Todd Garcia-Bish

We were wrapping things up, sifting through the last bucket full of soil. Most of the other 27 Saturday Safari attendees had finished screening their soil and had packed up their buckets and trowels. We had spent all morning digging at the archaeology site, learning about the early pioneer history of western Pennsylvania.

Zachary (10) and I were pulling rusty nails and bits of porcelain out of the screen when Bethany (7) picked something out of the screen asking, “What’s this?” It was coin- a half-penny, actually- and it was Canadian. Further investigation turned up a date: 1842.

Although the purpose of our archaeology site is to learn more about the past, we often end up with more questions than answers. Now we were wondering, “Why would the Heckert family (living here from the 1830s to the 1870s) have a Canadian coin?” We happened to share that question with the archaeologist who helped us set up the site 20 years ago, Ed Dlutowski. Ed theorized that the Heckerts may have been a stop on the Underground Railroad! They may have had coins (like this half-penny) to give to escaped slaves so that they had legal tender when they arrived in Canada.

We knew from other research that the Heckerts were Lutheran (they helped found Emmanuel Lutheran Church in Prospect), but we did not know if they were abolitionists. We turned to our friend (and former Lutherlyn counselor), Dr. Gilson Waldkoenig, at United Lutheran Seminary. Gil informed us that “when [Pr. William] Passavant led the founding of the Pittsburgh Synod in 1845, he put an anti-slavery position in its constitution. It was one of only three Lutheran synods to officially oppose slavery.” Pastor Passavant grew up in the same congregation, St. Paul’s Lutheran in Zelienople, where Michael and Juliana Heckert were married in 1834.

We may never know for sure if the Heckerts were part of the Underground Railroad, but finding this artifact has opened our eyes to a time in history and our Lutheran heritage that we know little about. This year we celebrate 20 years of Lutherlyn’s archaeology program. During that time we have asked countless questions. Unearthing this artifact is a good reminder that real knowledge is gained in looking for answers, not always in finding them.



Other archaeological finds:



This bottle held “Dr. Pierce’s Favorite Prescription,” which was a medicinal tonic marketed for women. It claimed to ease symptoms of “nerves” and the nervous system, as well as the female



This button is one of several that have been found that once adorned a Union uniform. Both Peter and John Heckert fought with the 137th Regiment, of the



Terra Dei Homestead: Solar-Powering our Future by Holly Schubert

In October, Terra Dei Homestead was a stop on the first ever Butler Harvest Solar Tour. The event, hosted by Re-Imagine Butler County and Solar United Neighbors, offered participants a bus tour of a variety of residential and commercial sites utilizing solar energy throughout Butler County. Through the tour, thirty people learned about the benefits of different kinds of systems for producing solar electricity, as well as things like solar policy and cost-benefit analysis. We also offered them a glimpse of the other sustainability features at Terra Dei Homestead, and shared information about Lutherlyn and LEEP programs.

Join us for the first annual
Butler Harvest Solar Tour

Lutherlyn is also laying the groundwork to add photovoltaic panels at other locations on the camp property. This past fall, John Younkin, of Blue Roof Farms Electric Solar Power Systems, inspected five different locations for possible installations. The locations varied from the Equestrian Center to Shaulis Village and the Rustic Retreat Center. The results indicate that Lutherlyn could conceivably produce all of its electricity needs with solar energy. Over the projected 50-year lifespan of the panels, that would save Lutherlyn over two million dollars! It is exciting to think about the programs and ministry that could be done with that money.



One of the great things about the proposals from Blue Roof Farms is that they are incremental. We could get a system started for about \$16,000 and then add to it as more money became available. Having these proposals in hand enables us to plan and dream about Lutherlyn's future.

The opportunity to one day power Lutherlyn with 100% renewable energy is exciting. Moving in that direction would vastly reduce our environmental impact on our planet and free up money for important programs and ministry opportunities. We will keep you posted as plans develop.

Would you like to receive this newsletter electronically? Simply email the LEEP staff (leep@lutherlyn.com) and your next newsletter will be an electronic one instead of a paper one.

Notes from the Naturalists (continued from page 1)



note the very long stem. It grows in wet areas, and we found it in a wet area of forest near the Sugar Shack and Upper Lake.

One of the things that we have been learning about recently is Clubmosses, a.k.a. Ground Pine or Ground Cedar. It is very hard to converse about because botanists are having trouble agreeing on what to call these primitive plants. That aside, they are amazing organisms. When we find a "stand" in the forest, they are probably all one plant that has spread through underground stems. Like ferns they reproduce using spores, but, unlike ferns, their spores are explosive when ignited and were used in fireworks and early flash photography. Amazingly, it takes nearly twenty years for their spores to develop into plants that we see above the ground.



Share this newsletter with a friend!

LEEP Public Programs

Saturday Safaris

Lutherlyn Saturday Safaris are a great way to spend part of a Saturday! They are designed for groups and families of all sizes and shapes. Safaris are \$7.00 per person and all of the programs involve outdoor adventures!



Please check LEEP's website (www.lutherlyn.com/EE) or contact the LEEP office for more information or to register for a program.

- **March 7, 2020**- Maple Sugaring, 9:30-12:00 or 1:00-3:30
- **September 12, 2020** - Amphibian Hunt, 9:30-12:00
- **November 7, 2020** - Survival Skills, 9:30-12:00
- **February 6, 2021** - Birdfeeder Building, 9:30-12:00

The Nature of Lutherlyn: Looking for a way to stay connected with LEEP and the nature of Lutherlyn between visits or field trips? Follow our blog, *The Nature of Lutherlyn*, or Lutherlyn's facebook page. Each Wednesday morning on Lutherlyn's facebook page, LEEP will post a *What is It Wednesday* photo. Readers have all day to guess what the photo is, and around 6 pm LEEP will provide the answer and a brief explanation. *What is it Wednesdays* are re-posted on the blog, usually the next day, and sometimes with expanded information. The blog also includes an archive of past *What is it Wednesday* posts. **Both current**



and past posts are tagged and searchable on the blog! If you want a post and photo to share with students or friends on trees, seeds, insects, animal tracks, or other nature topics, you can find it. Challenge yourself or your students to make a guess and learn along the way!

<http://lutherlynnature.blogspot.com>
<https://www.facebook.com/CampLutherlyn>

You Are Invited:
CampBlast



Saturday, May 9, 2020

Join us for a day of FUN that highlights all that Lutherlyn has to offer.

The best part.... **EVERYTHING IS FREE!**

Special Offer for New Schools

20% off Day Trips

15% off Overnight Trips

