

May 2, 2011



PARK PICKS
by
FRIENDS OF THE ALLENTOWN PARKS

Join us today! Become a member and help make Allentown's great park system even better.

“Rockin’ Robin” - sung by Bobby Day, lyrics by Leon Rene (1958)

He rocks in the treetops all day long
Hoppin’ and a-boppin’ and a-singing his song
All the little birds on Jaybird street
Love to hear the robin go tweet, tweet, tweet
Rockin’ robin...



Dr. Kimberly Heiman discusses plans regarding Trout Creek restoration activities during the April 30 Discovery Walk—**Trout Creek Parkway Conservation and Restoration.**

This Week’s Discovery Walks

Please join Friends of the Allentown Parks on Friday May 6 at 8:00 a.m. at Trexler Park for **Birdwatching for Beginners** (meet at Springhouse Rd. entrance).

May 7 at 10:00 a.m. we **Name that Tree** in Cedar Creek Parkway (meet in Cedar Beach parking lot).

Animals, Animals Everywhere!

Allentown’s parks are full of **adventure and excitement**. Walk along a path and you might find frogs; pass a bush and it may be covered in butterflies. Visit Trexler Park and you may be lucky enough to spot a fox or even a wild turkey. Look up into the trees of Cedar Creek Parkway and West Park and it is not unusual to spy wonderful birds such as Northern Goshawks, Red-tail Hawks, owls and even eagles. The Malcolm Gross Rose Garden was once visited by a graceful deer and several years ago a bear found respite near the Allentown Trout Nursery. And although the bear found a new home courtesy of the Pennsylvania Fish and Game Commission, one can usually spot Great Blue Herons at the Nursery. Stroll over to Lehigh Parkway, Dadonna Terrace or Cedar Creek Parkway and you may wonder about dammed waterways. Yes, we have beavers! And, there is no shortage of turtles (Rose Garden, Dadonna Terrace, Cedar Creek Parkway). Even a Snowy Egret and beautiful Snow Geese have migrated through, stopping off at Lake Muhlenberg.

All these sightings exemplify the ecological balance found in our parks. And yes, even snakes have an important role to play. If you’re lucky you just might catch a glimpse of a Northern watersnake in one of our streamside parks. Watersnakes are quite common. They can display a fairly wide variety of color patterns; younger snakes are more obviously patterned with splotches of red, brown, black and gray. As they age their colors tend to fade, making them appear almost uniformly dark gray (although immediately after shedding their skin their color patterns are more obvious). Females are considerably larger than males, and can grow to be about 3 feet long. Males are thinner and rarely exceed two feet in length.

Animals, cont’d

This is a busy time of year for watersnakes. Snakes can lose a lot of weight during their long winter hibernation and need to replenish themselves, almost exclusively eating small- to medium-sized fish. If you’re looking for a reason to appreciate our local watersnakes here it is: watersnakes eat a lot of carrion, particularly dead and dying fish and fish parts discarded by fishermen. Without watersnakes our streamside parks would get pretty smelly by the end of summer.

The watersnake’s natural predators include herons, hawks, raccoons and skunks. **WATERSNAKES ARE HARMLESS!** According to very reliable sources, we do not have any dangerous snake species in our parks. Watersnakes can, however, put on a pretty good show if you threaten them, but they are far more likely to just lay low, sit still, and hope you just keep walking and let them be.

It is unlawful to kill, tease or harm any animals in our parks. We are pleased to have such an ecologically balanced system and hope to keep it for future generations. Thank-you.

*Dr. Abigail Pattishall of the **Wildlands Conservancy** contributed to this article.*



Our thanks to the students of the Dieruff High School Honor Society for volunteering their time and energy to clean up Trout Creek Parkway on April 30.

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