



Pennsylvania Forest Stewards News

A bi-monthly newsletter of the Pennsylvania Forest Stewards Volunteer Program

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... We Called Them Jungle Birds...

By Louise and Jim Sprowls '09

We called them jungle birds. Shouting raucously to each other above our heads, they reminded us of a sound track of a movie about the African jungle. But they were shy, and a bird identification book based on pictures was useless, so we were content to hear them and know they felt safe in the woodlands we had just bought.

When we built the house in a central clearing, we disturbed as little as possible of its surroundings. Using the driveway of an abandoned homestead, we also kept the pine trees that once sheltered it. Wind moving through a few pines gives a very different sound to a deciduous woods. Every day we visited the construction site. During one of those visits I looked out a new window to see an 8 point buck stroll by. Apparently this was a safe haven for many residents.

There was plenty of water from a spring and we had a pond built. Mallards selected a nesting site, and every year a row of fuzzy little soldiers marches across the lawn.

Busy with work and volunteering many weekends for the Western PA Conservancy, we looked to our own forest as a place of refuge and relaxation. Flocks of turkeys visit each winter, scratching out tidbits where springs seep out of the hillsides. We enjoyed watching the seasons change and especially looked forward to the first greenery of springtime. Until this year.

Urged by Jim Finley to learn more about our woodlands, we are now more keenly aware of the details that surround us. It is no longer just the backdrop to our activities. Those first green bushes of springtime have turned into hours of pulling up multiflora roses. Funny, they didn't seem to bother the bears who visit regularly. Last year a mother brought her 4 cubs. Good nutrition means large families.

Write a plan, they said. Without a plan to improve our woodlands, all we have are wishes. We wished to be good stewards of our forest, not just for ourselves but also for all the wildlife. Plans are written by experts, and various experts may have various ideas of stewardship. A state forester provided a list of names and one person described himself as a wildlife biologist. Arriving for his interview, he was hesitant. Did we want to hear his presentation on why we should select him instead of another plan writer? No, we said, you're already hired. We want a plan that improves the forest and focuses on the wildlife.

Then it snowed. And snowed. And snowed some more. The trees looked three feet shorter than they did last summer and we wondered about our visitors, but they all returned. Unable to walk around much, the turkeys flew in. The woodpeckers shredded some snags near the house. Eventually the deer broke some trails. Not much else happened for a while until the snow melted.

Finally a warm spring day arrived and the plan writer returned. He measured, inventoried, observed, took notes. Allowing us to tag along, he was obviously very happy to spend this glorious day in the woods. He was puzzled when I told him it started with the jungle bird. Just then the pileated woodpecker called again, still happy and safe in our forest. This summer the plan will be written and the improvement of the forest will begin. Some more invasive plants will be removed and additional native food sources planted. And we will continue to enjoy the visits of all the other residents who feel safe here.

Jim Stiehler Retiring

At the end of July, we lose one of our strongest supporters. Jim Stiehler will retire from the DCNR Bureau of Forestry after a 35-year career. Starting with DCNR maintaining lawnmowers in state parks, Jim moved into the Bureau of Forestry. He spent sixteen years as the service forester for Centre and

Huntingdon Counties and the last ten years as the Stewardship Coordinator, working with service foresters across the state and supporting the Forest Stewardship program implementation and outreach.

We're going to miss Jim and his regular contributions to the PA Forest Stewards. Basic Training won't be the same without him.

But you still have two more opportunities to see Jim before he embarks on his retirement plans – lots of hunting and fishing, supporting church and the Pennsylvania Forestry Association, and enjoying his family:

On Saturday, July 24, Jim will be at the PA Forest Stewards Annual Meeting where he'll give a workshop on deer jawbone aging. Sign up to attend his workshop by sending in your registration soon.

On Friday, July 30, 11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m., the Bureau of Forestry will host a retirement party for Jim at Penn Nursery and Wood Shop in Spring Mills, PA (right off of 322). Lunch will cost ~\$7 a person. They are also collecting towards a retirement gift for Jim. If you'd like to attend, please contact Rachel Billingham at 717-783-0385 or rbillingha@state.pa.us. Come out and celebrate Jim!

PA Forest Stewards Endowment Update: Finley Pledge

As of the first of June, our endowment has a book value of \$65,474. We are well on our way to reaching our goal of creating a self-sustaining program. (And we are much admired by our peers in the Northeast and beyond for our efforts to become self-sufficient.)

Now, I am pleased to share a recent pledge commitment made to our program's endowment. Jim and Linda Finley, as part of their estate plans, have pledged \$200,000 to support the Pennsylvania Forest Stewards Endowment. Not only do Jim and Linda

contribute today by overseeing the program and managing a lot of the behind the scenes work to make sure events run smoothly, but they've also made a pledge to ensure the program continues beyond their tenure. This is further evidence of the importance and support of this volunteer program. Thank you Jim and Linda!

We share this pledge, not only to thank Jim and Linda, but to also encourage you to think about ways you may be able to financially support the program. Outright gifts and/or planned gifts of any size will have a significant impact on the future of our volunteer program. The specific dollar amount is not as important as the demonstrated belief in what the Pennsylvania Forest Stewards have and can do to contribute to land stewardship across Pennsylvania and beyond.

I hope the Finleys' example will encourage you to think about your own commitment of financial support. If you would like to make a contribution or have questions about ways in which you can contribute, such as through a gift annuity or a charitable remainder trust, the College of Ag Sciences Development Office has resources to help you. Kirk Swanson, Associate Director of Development, can assist you in identifying ways in which you may support our endowment while creating a revenue stream, as well as tax benefits. You may contact Kirk directly at 814-867-2230 or kms24@psu.edu. Thanks for your consideration.

Yearbook Biography

As mentioned in an earlier newsletter, we are in the midst of creating a "yearbook" of PA Forest Stewards. We started with the steering committee and now would like to start collecting stories from all the volunteers.

If you would please, send us a few sentences about who you are (job, family, etc.), your land, hobbies, interests, skills you'd like to contribute, and anything else you would like to share. We've got pictures of most folks who have attended the annual meeting in recent years. We hope to create a useful document for you and us to use to remember folks you meet at training, make connections in your county, and help strengthen our community of volunteers.

Take a few minutes to jot down something you'd be willing to have others see. Send it to Allyson and we'll get it in the system so we can create our yearbook. Thank you.

Help Us Write the Next Newsletter

Fun stories? Ideas for stories? Articles you'd like to see written? We welcome your thoughts, suggestions, and contributions to the PA Forest Stewards Newsletter. Help us make this newsletter more relevant for you.

You don't have to be a professional writer. We'll help you edit. We're looking for ways to share more of your voices in this newsletter. Send your ideas, contributions, etc. to Allyson. Thanks in advance.

Dates for Your 2010 Calendar

Wednesday, June 23, Registration for the annual meeting and in-service training due. Also if you are staying in one of the hotels with designated blocks, reservations must be made by June 23.

Friday, July 23, 10 a.m. – 4 p.m., In-service Training, Chainsaw Maintenance and Woods Safety, Ag Progress Days site, Centre County.

Saturday, July 24: 9 a.m. – 4 p.m. Annual Meeting, Ag Progress Days site, Centre County.

September 10-12 and October 1-3: Basic Training for New Volunteers, Camp Sequanota, Jennerstown, Somerset County.

September 2010: An additional in-service training focused on communication skills: getting a forest stewardship message out. We'll share details as they are finalized.

Saturday, October 2: Come meet the new PA Forest Stewards. Join us for dinner and the evening program at Camp Sequanota, Jennerstown, Somerset County.

Heads-up: 2011 is the International Year of Forests

Newsletter by Email?

Would you like to receive your copy of the PA Forest Stewards Newsletter by email? We can oblige. Please let Allyson know if you'd prefer **not** to receive a paper copy. Thanks.

Contact Forestry Extension

Forestry Extension
Penn State School of Forest Resources
416 Forest Resources Building
University Park, PA 16802
(814) 863-0401
(800) 235-9473
Jim Finley: fj4@psu.edu
Allyson Muth: abm173@psu.edu

Program Sponsors

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