

## From Summer to Fall . . . Time of Transition

My father used to tell me that Columbus Day was the optimum day for fall leaf color viewing. I don't think that is true any longer in the Delaware Valley. Our maple, beech, poplar and oak are turning color later and dropping later than 55 years ago when I was a youngster.

September used to be a transition month. It started out hot, carrying over from August and then transitioned into a cooler ending. Autumn officially starts the 22<sup>nd</sup> of September with the Autumnal Equinox. This marks the time in the year when we have an equal amount of daylight and darkness. From this point until the first day of winter our hours of daylight will become shorter. But with our climate warming, the coming of cooler weather is later in the year. The beginning of October can now be quite warm, almost August like.



So, at this point in mid-October almost a month into Fall, what should we be noticing in our Open Land Conservancy preserves? I already mentioned the weather and by mid-October we should be seeing some cooler weather and perhaps some rainfall to replenish our parched soils and augment our depleted stream flows.

Summer to Fall is a time of transition. It is the ending of the bountiful season of long daylight hours and rapid plant growth. Fall begins with equal amounts of daylight and darkness and gradually the daylight becomes less as the nights become longer. Fall is a time to harvest the abundance of summer. At this time on the local farms there will still be feed corn standing, soy beans in the field and pumpkins. In the forest preserves the acorn and beech nuts will have fallen.

Red rose hips on the multiflora rose and the blue seed berries of mile-a-minute vine will be obvious. The yellow cases over the red oriental bittersweet have not yet

matured and split. These ornaments serve to remind us of the prolific nature of these plants as well as the fact that these fruits provide no food value to our native birds and animals. Winter grapes will be starting to fruit as will poison ivy providing overwintering bird and animals sustenance in leaner times. There are glorious yellow fields of golden rod. The blackberry bushes have produced their fruit and have dried and hardened to form impenetrable thickets.

By now the crazy increase in yellow jacket activity has calmed down from its peak in mid-September. And all insect activity has decreased dramatically. Though we may still have grasshoppers and crickets chirping on warm days with the first hard frost they will be gone. Gone as well are the mosquitoes and biting flies, a welcome relief. But the ticks are still here and will be all year. Although they are much less active in temperatures below 40 degrees.

Migration of the earlyies. . . Some don't migrate anymore – Canada geese. Our swallows, oven birds and thrushes will start making their way south as will the warblers. As the insect population decreases there is less food available for these bug eaters. They need to move on to find adequate food. The hummingbirds will have been gone for a while as nectar producing plants cease producing.

What birds remain in our area? Lots. Here is a partial list that are available to be seen in our preserves at this time of year. blue jays, crows, black capped chickadees, great blue herons, belted kingfishers, white-throated sparrows, turkey and black vultures, woodpeckers (downy, hairy, red breasted and pileated), robins, nuthatches, juncos, hawks (red tail, cooper's, sharp shinned, broad winged), owls (barred, screech and great horned). *(continued on page 2)*



*The retreating large pond in the Lorimer Preserve*

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## From Summer to Fall . . . Time of Transition (contd)

Other animals will be bulking up for winter preparing for hibernation – groundhogs, chipmunks, bats, snakes and turtles are a few that hibernate. Others bulk up because there is less food available in the winter and want to put on that extra fat that will see them through the leaner times. This is true for the many predators and foragers. Fox, weasels and coyotes hunt hard to bulk up for winter. Raccoons, skunks, opossums, and rabbits are feeding heavily to add fat to help them through the winter lean food times.

The squirrels (grey, red and flying) as well as the mice and voles are stashing away part of the bounty to be used during the winter. And in case you thought that reproduction thoughts were only a spring fantasy, our over abundant whitetail deer are in rut. The males are pairing with females, or groups of females if the buck can keep his girls in line. The deer are really out of their heads at this time of year. This is the time, of year on up until about Thanksgiving, that you need be vigilant when driving in deer areas. While at other times of the year you see them on the side of the road checking for traffic – now they just rush out into it. Be careful especially in the hours around the low light times of day break and sunset.

There are many things that happen as we go through the seasonal changes. You just need to spend a bit of time in an Open Land Conservancy Preserve every so often to observe nature preparing for these changes. Please join us as we welcome fall and look forward to the winter season. *Pete Goodman*

## Preserve Highlight: Diamond Rock Preserve

Diamond Rock Preserve is a 66-acre preserve located on the South facing slope of Diamond Rock Hill which is part of North Valley Hill. The preserve is bordered by residential development on the north, east, and west sides and the Pennsylvania Turnpike to the south. It is a wooded area made up of steep slopes and a quartzite ridge running east and west along the top.

### DIAMOND ROCK PRESERVE FACTS:

**SIZE:** 66 acres      **TRAIL MILES:** 1.2

#### SPECIAL FEATURES:

- Borders the Horseshoe Trail
- 32 Species of Birds
- Seasonal View of The Great Valley

The land was originally associated with the “Welsh Tract” granted by William Penn. By 1686 the original 40,000-acre grant had been expanded to include what is now Tredyffrin Township and this preserve. By late 1800 the land on the mountain had been sub-divided and combined with farm properties in the valley, below Yellow Springs Road. The hillside forest was used as a source of lumber for these farms. By 1950 the Pennsylvania Turnpike was constructed between the mountain and the valley which led to a redevelopment of the land and an end to any significant lumber use.

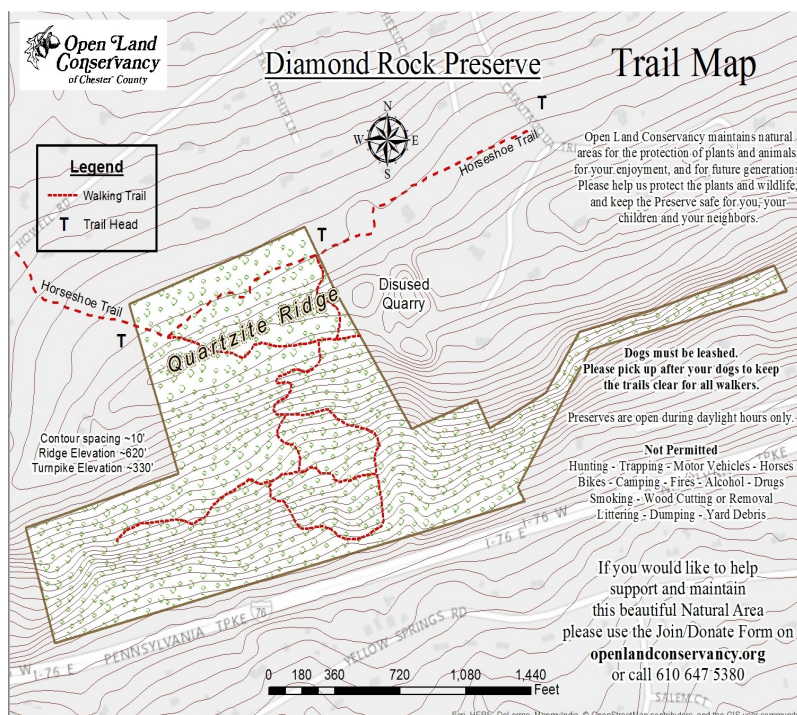
Diamond Rock Preserve was created by five separate acquisitions. The first in 1994, when Natural Lands Trust donated 24 acres to Open Land Conservancy. In 1998, 5.35 acres were obtained from the developers of the Chautauqua sub-division and in 1999 OLC was given an additional 1.36 acres as a gift from the High Mountain development. The Preserve was expanded significantly in 2008 with the purchase of an additional 20.6 acres on its western border. This purchase was funded by grants from Chester County’s Preservation Partnership Program and Pennsylvania’s Community Conservation Partnerships Program. In 2011 the Conservancy completed an agreement to purchase an additional 15 acres extending the preserve further along the Turnpike to the west. This acquisition was funded similarly to the 2008 acquisition.

The entire 66-acre preserve is comprised of woodland, primarily made up of oak, tulip and beech trees with an understory of mountain laurel, cherry birch and maple leaf viburnum. If you have been to the Pocono Mountains, the preserve will remind you very much of that area.

The preserve is also home to a range of animal life typically found in close proximity to suburban areas. Various mammals inhabit the preserve; the most significant being the white tailed deer. The Valley Forge Chapter of the Audubon Society conducted bird counts on four separate occasions and observed at least 32 separate species, including various types of warblers, eastern bluebirds and also a pileated woodpecker.

Access to the preserve is provided by a 1340-foot section of the Horseshoe Trail that runs off of a private driveway on Chautauqua Circle. The Horseshoe Trail was opened to the public in 1935 for equestrian and pedestrian use and continues to pass through what is now preserve land. While Diamond Rock Preserve is the least visited of OLC’s preserves, it is often used by neighbors of the Preserve.

The Conservancy is gradually building and marking a trail network in the preserve, thanks in particular to our student volunteers and interns. Members who are ready for a strenuous hike down from the ridge and back amongst the majestic old trees can also play a part in establishing the trails. We encourage members to visit the preserve this Fall to enjoy the changing colors.



## Board Member Profile: John Etherington



John Etherington has served on the OLC Board of Directors for over 25 years and has lived in the Great Valley for over 30 years. He became interested in the OLC when he and his wife Nancy first moved to North Valley Road, and discovered the beautiful 88 acre Lorimer preserve right behind their house. The preserve was a treasure for their three children - who came to understand how important open space was in a suburban environment.

When John was growing up close to Philadelphia, he thought that Paoli was pretty much the end of the earth, and that not a lot happened out this way – little did he know he would be living here for most of his adult life.

After getting a BA in Communications from Florida State and an MA in Communications from The University of Texas at Austin, followed by a three year stint as a teacher on Long Island, he came back to the Philadelphia area to work in video production. Eventually, he joined the DuPont Company where he worked in marketing and marketing communications for 29 years. He has served on a variety of local boards including the Great Valley Association, and volunteers at the Colonial Theater in Phoenixville.

Since his retirement two years ago, John has continued to serve on the OLC Board as Communications Chair. He is also Treasurer for the Edgemere Club in the Poconos and among other activities, spends time with his children and three grandchildren.

Conestoga High School offers its seniors an opportunity to explore a potential career area during the month preceding their graduation. The student designs a program of observation or hands-on experience in an area of possible career interest; this offers them a chance to explore the chosen field and to assess whether it is a viable career option. In addition, the student gains insight into a professional environment.

## The Conservancy's Senior Internship Program

The Conservancy has sponsored students in this Senior Internship program for many years. Although an all-volunteer organization, OLC does offer a window into a fast-growing profession through our adherence to industry standards and practices and through our partnerships with local organizations and their staff. For career context, in 2010 land trusts had conserved some 47 million acres, up from 23 million in 2000 and more than double the size of all the national parks in the contiguous United States. In addition, our Interns have a hands-on experience and make a lasting impact on the local environment.

Our Intern in 2016 was Chris Karmilowicz. Chris chose to work with OLC Preserve Managers on the many maintenance tasks throughout the Preserves. Notably, he played a key role helping Pete Goodman, Tim Magee and Ray Clarke undertake major repairs to the Eagle Scout bridge at the junction of Cedar Hollow Run and Valley Creek, critical to the riparian walking trail in Cedar Hollow Run. Another major project took Chris through all the Preserves that have new tubed tree plantings; each tree was assessed, vegetation cleared, and any needed repairs made. OLC signs are important to awareness and integrity of OLC properties; Chris worked to refurbish signs, paint trail blazes and also, as shown in the nearby photo, helped us finally get a sign at our remote Abernethy Forest Preserve in East Bradford township. He joined us at a meeting with leadership from the Tree Vitalize program to plan the *Phragmites* restoration project in Cedar Hollow Preserve.



These types of projects (and office-related ones of some previous years) are a great benefit to the Conservancy. Students have much to gain, too, from the program. Chris offered the following comments at the conclusion of his program:

*"I would like to thank Open Land Conservancy for giving me the opportunity to work with them. I spent each day working with kind people who are extremely knowledgeable and passionate about the lands they are protecting. Thanks to them I was able to improve my carpentry skills, by assisting with the Cedar Hollow bridge repair, my knowledge of local vegetation and how to distinguish an invasive species from a native one. It's been amazing how much I have been able to learn in only four weeks. I hope that I will be able to volunteer with the Conservancy again in the future!"*

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