

From Winter to Spring . . . The Welcome Change

It seems like it was just last week that I wrote an article about the blizzard of 2016 snow melting to reveal blooming flowers – hellebores, winter aconite and snow drops. Also, that Punxsutawney Phil didn't see his shadow and spring would be arriving early – according to legend if not by calendar. But that must have been a month ago or more by now. Since then we have had some very unseasonably warm weather which has brought out all sorts of signs of spring. It is now official by the calendar. The day after Spring arrived, we woke to a covering of snow in the woods.



It seems the coming of spring increases my awareness to my surroundings. The flowers, I am always drawn to the flowers. Now the yellow tops of the aconite have passed as well as the crocus blooms only to be replaced with daffodils. The cherry blossoms have not been sure when to bloom – some were very early and some are very bright right now. As usual the magnolias have popped their big pink-white blooms just in time to be nipped by that forecasted frost.

The skunk cabbage is showing well but feels like it has come late and the willows are greening and some producing catkins. If you look closely most of what is greening are invasive plants. That bright green ground cover with the yellow flowers, lesser celandine, which is filling all of our stream valleys and nearly every place else – an invasive. Look at the shrubs in the woods and along the roadside and what is getting green is bush honeysuckle and multiflora rose getting a jump start on our natives. Though, I have seen some spice bush yellowing up and the maples are getting red at the end of their branches.

As far as the critters go, they too have been taking advantage of this early spring. We heard our first spring peepers the first week of March. I was seeing groundhogs along the turnpike berms sunning themselves before that. Flocks of Canada geese, the ones that migrate, have been flying high over the house heading north. Our local resident Canada geese have paired up and have jockeyed for nest locations. I am patiently waiting for the arrival of the spring warblers. The OLC Preserves are a great place for viewing these small sometimes brightly colored singers.

Last week a friend who walked in Cedar Hollow Preserve said he had seen both a couple of water snakes and a garter snake as well as two frogs. The warm temperatures have penetrated the ground and the earth worms are again becoming active and obvious when flooded out into parking lots.



Many fisherman are guided by what shrub or tree might be blooming to indicate when a certain species of insect might appear for them to replicate when casting to trout. When the shadbush blooms it means the shad are starting up the Delaware River on their annual spawning migration. Now that the forsythia has started blooming, look for blue-winged olive mayflies if you are a trout fisher on Valley Creek.

Keep watching for those spring warblers and those wonderful pre-leaf out wild flowers Blood Root, Dutchman's Britches, Spring Beauties and Hepatica. I'll see you in the Preserves. - *Pete Goodman*

GLOBAL WARMING From Concept to Reality . . . What We Need to Know

Please Join us for our Annual Meeting!

**7:30 pm Tuesday, April 19th, 2016
Great Valley Presbyterian Church
2025 Swedesford Road**

We are extremely fortunate to have an expert on the topic, Richard Whiteford, to discuss the issue with us.

Preserve Highlight: Cool Valley Preserve

Cool Valley Preserve is, at 33 acres, the smallest of the Conservancy's six Tredyffrin Preserves, but it lacks nothing for charm. It is located in the Shadow Oak development, bounded by the abandoned Warner Spur rail line to the east, residences on Windswept and Shadow Oak Drives and Cool Valley Road to the south and west, and by a property line just to the north of Valley Creek to the north. A 40' wide strip extends south along the rail line to Swedesford Road. The main entrance is from the western tip at Cool Valley Road; this leads to a well-developed trail network that winds through woodlands and meadows.

COOL VALLEY PRESERVE FACTS:

SIZE: 33 acres **TRAIL MILES:** 1.75

SPECIAL FEATURES:

- 150 Year-old Chinquapin Oak
- 3 Reforestation plots totaling 1/2 acre
- Adjacent to abandoned Warner Spur rail line



The Conservancy received the Preserve in 1979 as three separate gifts, originating from two larger farms (the Elliott Farm and the Cool Valley Farm) that were sold for the Shadow Oak development. The developers contributed the upland sections and Mrs. Kalthenthaler, owner of the Cool Valley Farm, gifted 6 acres of floodplain and steep slopes along Valley Creek at the north in memory of her husband Henry. Establishment of the Preserve took three years or more while the development went through bankruptcy; OLC had to deal with many encroachment and stormwater management issues.

The land, and the other OLC valley Preserves in the 40,000 acre "Welsh Tract" granted to William Penn, was almost entirely cleared of forests and converted to agricultural use. The "History of Chester County" by Futhey and Cope (1881) describes the southern farm and its owner, Conrad Acker, as follows:

"When he bought it [in 1850], the land was covered with woods which he cleared off, and on this farm of one hundred and seventeen acres he erected all the buildings and has made many valuable improvements. His farm is pleasantly located in the beautiful Chester Valley, and his home betokens happiness and comfort, as his homestead does thrift and prosperity."

In 1857 the Cedar Hollow railroad was constructed along the eastern boundary of the property. This linked Cedar Hollow station on the Chester Valley Railroad with the limestone quarries operated by the Cedar Hollow Lime Company to the north-east of the Preserve land. The railroad crossed Valley Creek by means of a wooden trestle. (The attached photograph shows the trestle in 1914, viewed from what is now the Preserve.)

It has been reported anecdotally that during Prohibition local moonshiners operated a still on the hill leading down to the creek from where the trestle photo was taken. The operators were alerted to periodic police raids and survived by removing the copper and expensive portions of the apparatus, leaving behind the tin parts and piping that were easily and inexpensively replaced. Newspaper headlines reported that the still was destroyed, but by the following evening it was back in operation!

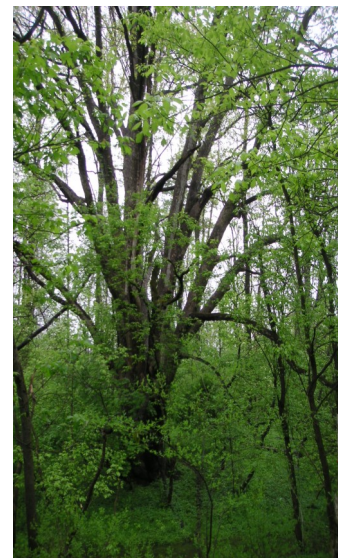
That section of the Preserve was too steep to farm and so contains the most native and significant habitat on the preserve. A pretty but strenuous circular trail leads down to the creek (with its naturally reproducing brown trout) through tall older tulip, black walnut and white ash trees. Across the creek to the north is a magnificent Chinquapin Oak, *Quercus muhlenbergii*, a member of the white oak group typically found on calcareous soils and rocky slopes (and in OLC's other Preserves). This example is over 70 feet tall and with a base circumference over 16 feet, the third largest in the PA Forestry Association's Big Tree program.

The woodland merges into a scrubby invasive-dominated thicket towards the main trail leading into the preserve – a prime site for the Conservancy's restoration program. In 2012 our meadow mowing service, Lentzcaping Inc., cleared three plots totaling about half an acre, and with management assistance from our friends at Green Valleys Watershed Association, trees from the TreeVitalize program and enthusiastic planting labor from employees of Siemens Medical Systems (see photograph below) we planted 300 native trees. Three years later, the birch, blackgum, oak, ash, maples and more are bursting out of their protective tubes. The section of the Preserve south of the entrance trail is maintained as two cool season grass meadows dotted with trees and separated by a hedgerow. The southern boundary of the preserve is tree-lined with planted evergreens and poplars.

The abandoned rail line to the east of the preserve has been marked for a future township trail - the Patriots Path. Subject to careful implementation that protects the rural nature of the Preserve, this presents an exciting opportunity to broaden access by connecting with the Chester County Trail to the south and to the Conservancy's Cedar Hollow Preserve and East Whiteland's Valley Creek Park to the north and west.

Join us in enjoying and protecting this hidden gem!

For more information, including a trail map, please visit www.openlandconservancy.org/Cool_Valley_Preserve.html



Board Member Profile: Molly Fontanesi Duffy, Esq.



Molly Duffy has served on the OLC board of directors for four years. She also serves as chair of the Organizational Development committee.

For over 20 years, Molly has focused on solving a broad range of environmental and social problems. She has worked with nonprofit organizations, government and businesses. She has served in many different capacities including: management, fundraising, legal and policy work, outreach and communications.

Her business, Earthsmart Consulting, LLC, works with organizations on a range of sustainability issues with a focus on active transportation. Clients include Rails to Trails Conservancy, Sustrana, and the Transportation Management Association of Chester County. She has also worked for Habitat for Humanity International and Brandywine Conservancy.

An active community volunteer, Molly served as chairman of the Tredyffrin Township Environmental Advisory Council and co-founded the township's Sidewalks Trails and Paths Committee.

Molly earned a law degree with an emphasis on environmental law in 1995, from the University of Richmond. She graduated *magna cum laude* from Villanova University in 1992 with a degree in Communication Arts and a Business minor. While at Villanova, Molly was active in Campus Ministry.

Molly lives in Paoli where she enjoys walking in Airdrie Preserve with her husband Tom and their four children.

The Conservancy's Mission to preserve and enhance the Open Space with which we are entrusted would be impossible to fulfill without the contributions of our partners throughout our community. These partners come in many forms: service providers; other land trusts; conservation organizations like Trout Unlimited; the National Park Service; the State, County and Township governments; youth groups like Scouts and High School Key Club members; corporate teams from companies such as Siemens Medical Systems; all the individuals who volunteer their time and expertise; and last, but not least, our members who fund the acquisition of services that must be purchased.

OLC Supporters: Conservancy Partners

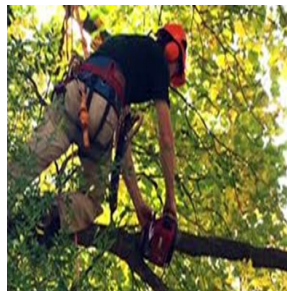
In each of the next few issues of Landmarks we will profile members from one or more of these groups. We ask you to join us in thanking them as you meet them in the Preserves or at work in the community.

Our Preserve management service providers are first up in this process. The Conservancy is blessed with long-term partners that provide high quality and reliable services at extremely favorable rates. We are so grateful to:

- Trail Mowing: **Dave Ludwick Landscaping**
- Tree Services: **New Life Tree Care, Tom Allison**
- Meadow Mowing: **Lentzcaping Inc, Steve Happ, Bob Tasch**
- Invasive control: **Weeds Inc., Brian O'Neill**

These partners are supported by local maintenance efforts of neighbors like Harold Sheinbach in Cool Valley Preserve, Bud Colman in George Lorimer Preserve and Dennis Nackord in Valley Creek Preserve, along with Conservancy Board members.

It is through the hard work and commitment of these companies and individuals that the Preserves are kept open and safely accessible for the enjoyment of all. In our next issue: our youth group and corporate partners.



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*Are you interested in preserving the open space
of Chester County for future generations?*

*Ask us about becoming an OLC board member or
volunteer!*

