

# Currents



## Wissahickon Clean Water Partnership By Gina Craigo

**F**or the past year, the Wissahickon Valley Watershed Association (WVWA) spearheaded a voluntary partnership of the 16 municipalities and four sewer authorities that are located in the Wissahickon Creek Watershed.

Although the Wissahickon Creek beautifully meanders through the gorge in Philadelphia, the headwaters are a different picture. Home to almost 250,000 people and highly developed, stormwater runoff poses the greatest challenge to water quality. Runoff from roofs, driveways, lawns and parking lots picks up contaminants such as motor oil and grease from automobiles,



Mary-Margaret Manser

lawn chemicals such as fertilizers and herbicides, pet waste and other pollutants and washes them into the Wissahickon Creek and its tributaries. Additionally, storm-water runoff causes stream bank erosion, resulting in soils breaking away and entering the stream as sediment that harms fish, aquatic life and other wildlife, as well as causes flash flooding conditions that endanger valuable public recreation areas, and puts our residents and businesses at risk.

In response to these conditions the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), in 2015, released new regulations and standards for the amount of nutrients and sediments allowed in the creek, updating the previous Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) for phosphorus, nitrogen and sediment. A TMDL is a regulatory term in the U.S. Clean Water Act, describing a value of the maximum amount of a pollutant that a body of water can receive while still meeting water quality standards.

This draft TMDL sparked an exploration and discussion of an “alternative” approach to improve water quality starting in March 2015. This opportunity placed WVWA in a leadership role to foster the collaboration of the stakeholder group of municipalities and wastewater treatment plants to discuss the water quality needs of the Wissahickon Creek.

To ensure efforts were successful and an open dialogue maintained, WVWA met over several months with township managers and commissioners, attended public municipal sessions, and worked with the local stakeholders and the EPA, PA Department of Environmental Protection (PADEP) and the Montgomery County Planning Commission.

(Continued on page 2)

## Wissahickon Clean Water Partners

The partnership is comprised of 16 municipalities and 4 sewer authorities working with the PA DEP and the Montgomery County Planning Commission to address the Wissahickon Creek’s impaired water quality.

### Municipalities:

- Abington Township
- Ambler Borough
- Cheltenham Township
- Horsham Township
- Lansdale Borough
- Lower Gwynedd Township
- Montgomery Township
- North Wales Borough
- Philadelphia County
- Springfield Township
- Upper Dublin Township
- Upper Gwynedd Township
- Upper Moreland Township
- Whitmarsh Township
- Whitpain Township
- Worcester Township

### Wastewater Treatment Plants:

- Abington
- Ambler
- Upper Gwynedd
- Upper Dublin



**Support the Clean Water Partnership**

# Restoring Nature's Nectarers

## Five Must-Have Plants for Your Garden in the Wissahickon

By Dennis O. Miranda

Margaret Rohde



**S**ome of the most beneficial native plants that should be placed in your garden are actually threatened or declining in Pennsylvania. WVWA is diligently working to put once prolific native plants back into the watershed. The loss of habitat due to urban development and deer overpopulation creates landscapes devoid of native plants and allows invasive plants to flourish. A plant study conducted of WVWA preserves concluded non-native plants currently outcompete and outnumber native plants. WVWA installed three deer exclosures to monitor the growth of protected native plants and understand which plants naturally flourish in our region. However, our efforts alone are not enough, it will take the community. WVWA encourages residents to fill their gardens with these beautiful native plants. Here are five plants we recommend for your garden:

**1 Scarlet Bee Balm** (*Monarda didyma*) an attractive deep red flower that can grow easily in your garden. The stalks grow between two and five feet and it is a favorite source of nectar for hummingbirds and pollinating insects.

**2 Swamp Milkweed** (*Asclepias incarnata*) is a versatile plant that will adapt well to backyards and gardens with ample sun and moist soils. The dramatic increase in the use of herbicides has taken its toll on the Milkweed family.

There is a national movement to plant more Swamp Milkweed, a host plant and major source of nectar for the Monarch Butterfly.

**3 Possum Haw** (*Viburnum nudum*) is a large shrub measuring upwards of 12 feet and is found in wetlands, pond margins and moist forest edges in southeastern Pennsylvania. This plant carries small white flowers in spring, goes to fruit by June and its waxy leaves turn crimson in the fall. The annual transformation of the species makes it a handsome shrub in any garden. It

will thrive in moist to normal soils with part sun or dappled sunlight.

**4 Sweet Bay Magnolia** (*Magnolia virginiana*) is a stunningly elegant flower whose aromatic fragrance attracts beneficial insects including bees in search of pollen. Reaching its northern limits in Southeastern Pennsylvania, the Sweet Bay Magnolia is at home in a sunny corner of your backyard as well as in nearby wet woods and forest edges.

**5 Canada Serviceberry** (*Amelanchier Canadensis*) is critically imperiled according to the Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program, a state agency that tracks the abundance of Pennsylvania's fauna and flora. This stunning understory tree is found in thickets and wetlands and will do well in your rain garden. The soft fragrant white flowers bloom in April and will provide fruits for birds and mammals.

**All of these plants will be available, on a limited basis, at the WVWA Plant Sale on May 13-14, 2016!** 🌿

## WVWA Native Plant Sale

**Staff and volunteers** will be on hand to answer your questions and help you select the plants best suited for your personal garden.

**Open to Members**  
Friday, May 13

**Open to General Public**  
Saturday, May 14

## Clean Water Partnership (Cont. from page 1)

**Meeting the January 29, 2016, deadline**, all 16 municipalities and all four of the sewer authorities in the watershed committed to pursuing a TMDL Alternative plan, now known as the Wissahickon Clean Water Partnership.

**The Wissahickon Clean Water Partnership** is an unprecedented opportunity for communities to develop local solutions designed to restore the Wissahickon Creek. This voluntary partnership aims to develop a watershed-wide plan to make significant water quality improvements and public investments while evaluating the causes of the problem. A

coordinated solution will both improve water quality and help municipalities, sewer authorities and taxpayers keep costs down.

**Throughout the spring**, WVWA will provide planning and educational outreach assistance to watershed municipalities and will work closely with watershed townships and wastewater treatment plant operators to identify opportunities and develop approaches to improve water quality until the alternative Wissahickon Clean Water Partnership strategy outline is submitted to PA DEP and EPA in Spring 2016. 🌿



# WVWA Volunteers Recognized



David Freed

🌿 2016 Volunteer Awardees - from left; Jane Keyes of Tex Mex Connection, Wendy McClure, Doug McClure, Debbie Whiteley, Nancy Kreider, Jamie Stewart, Phil Albright

## By Gina Craigo

**M**embers, volunteers and friends joined together for the WVWA Annual Meeting and Annual Volunteer Recognition. Attendees had the opportunity to connect over their common passion of protecting the Wissahickon Watershed and hearing about the 2015 accomplishments of the organization. The evening culminated in acknowledging the 473 volunteers who donated the ever growing (7,953) hours of service – 1000 more than in 2014! Additionally, six volunteers received awards for their outstanding work.

### Nancy Kreider

#### Friend of the Watershed Award

A volunteer whose leadership, accommodations, and active collaboration have substantially benefited the WVWA.

### Debbie Whiteley

#### Sweep Award

A volunteer, whose tireless work and achievements behind the scenes on behalf of the WVWA led to highly successful events.

### Wendy & Doug McClure

#### Green Ribbon Award

Volunteers demonstrating exceptional dedication and achievements.

### Phil Albright

#### Distinguished Service Award

In recognition of exceptional volunteer service in furthering the goals of the WVWA in the full spectrum of engagement.

### Jamie Stewart

#### Lifetime Achievement Award

A volunteer who has given an enormous amount of time and energy to the WVWA over the years.

### Tex Mex Connection

#### Trailblazer Award

A business or foundation recognized for far-sighted vision and support, demonstrated by significant contributions to the WVWA. 🌿

# Ripples

## WVWA Receives Grant in Butterfly Conservation

**As part of a joint grant between** several Mid-Atlantic states, the Northeast Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies has awarded \$7,500 to WVWA. The grant, “Conservation and Management of Rare Wetland Butterflies”, is a project in the District of Columbia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and West Virginia.



Blaine Rothauer

🌿 Juniper Hairstreak

**In partnership** with the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, WVWA will work to enhance and expand populations of rare wetland butterflies through habitat improvement projects at Crossways Preserve. This will include the restoration of nectar and host plants for declining butterfly species, invasive plant removal, and the installation of a deer fence to protect important habitat.

## Thank You to our 2016 EITC Funders!

**The following corporations** generously support WVWA education endeavors through the Pennsylvania Educational Improvement Tax Credit Program (EITC).

- MSS
- SofterWare
- BB&T
- Ambler Savings Bank

**Their support** enables WVWA to provide our student centered conservation programs to over 2,400 youth in our region. WVWA's educational program works collaboratively with several local schools delivering an enriching hands-on learning experience on a variety of topics including watersheds, ground water, water chemistry, ecosystem biology and environmental science.

**Find out** how your company can support WVWA through the EITC program by visiting [www.newpa.com](http://www.newpa.com) and click on Programs & Funding. 🌿

## APRIL

### Bird Watching Basics



Discover easy methods to find and identify birds in the Wissahickon Creek Watershed through a series of three classes with experienced birders, Jamie Stewart and Amy Johns and WVWA Naturalist, Margaret Rohde.

**Sunday, April 3, 9:00am**  
**Sunday, April 10, 8:00am**  
**Sunday, April 17, 8:00am**

• Course: Members \$50; non-members \$75

water runoff. Learn how to hook up and care for your rain barrel, retaining runoff and reusing the water in your garden! Rain barrels are from Camel's Hump. Learn more at: [www.camels-hump.com](http://www.camels-hump.com)  
• \$75 for the cost of the Camel's Hump Barrel



### 46th Annual Creek Clean Up

**Saturday, April 30**  
Be part of the 46th Annual Wissahickon Creek Clean Up.

Help WVWA clean the trail and the creek bed too. Volunteers are pre-assigned to sections of the creek and trail. Canoes are also needed to help clean the deeper parts of the creek.



### Serve the Preserve

**Saturday, April 9 9:00am**

• Byrne Family Preserve  
Help WVWA

continue our restoration efforts this spring at our newest preserve – Byrne Family Preserve. Volunteers will remove invasive plants and plant native trees and shrubs. Please wear sturdy shoes for digging, and bring a shovel and gloves if you have them; otherwise we will provide.

## MAY



### 22nd Annual Birdathon

**Friday, May 6**  
**Saturday, May 7**

WVWA invites all birders to join the 22nd Annual Wissahickon Birdathon. During this friendly, two-day competition, teams canvass the Watershed and strive to identify the greatest number of bird species. Birders of all ages and skill levels are encouraged to join the fun and enjoy the camaraderie of their fellow birders.

### Native Plant Sale

**Open to Members**  
**Friday, May 13, 2:00**  
**Open to General Public**  
**Saturday, May 14, 9:00am**



Over 100 species of perennials, vines, ferns, shrubs and trees will be offered for sale at our Native Plant Sale.

### Rain Garden Workshop



**Friday, May 13 7:00pm**

Learn about the most beautiful way to conserve water - building your own rain garden! Simple to install and maintain, rain gardens are a thing of beauty. Learn where to site, how to build and what to plant in your rain garden.

## JUNE



### A Bird in the Hand: Banding at WVWA's MAPS Station

**Saturday, June 11 8:30am**

Members Only

Visit WVWA's banding site and see bird banding in action! Learn about avian conservation and research techniques, and find out what information can be collected by catching wild birds. You may even have the chance to release a bird from your hand!



### Bird Feeding Garden

**Friday June 17 7:00pm**

There are two ways to feed birds – buying birdseed and filling feeders every few days or by planting the plants they will eat for years or even generations to come. Join Steve Saffier of PA Audubon and learn what plants our native birds look to for food, shelter and nesting.



### Pine Barrens Discovery Tour

**Saturday, June 18 11:00am**

Join us for a unique exploration of the Pine Barren's diverse ecosystems. Guided by Pinelands Adventures Naturalist, John Volpa, we'll hike and paddle along the edges of the Mullica River and discover its many

### In Search of Salamanders, Frogs and More

**Saturday, April 16 10:00am**

Early spring is the best time to catch a glimpse of amphibians coming out of hibernation. Join Scott Angus, biologist with the RBA Group, on a tour of ponds, streams and pools of the Four Mills Reserve in search of salamanders, frogs and more.

### Rain Barrel Workshop

**Thursday, April 21 7:00pm**

Rain barrels collect water that would normally flow directly off the roof through gutter down spouts and become storm





# Calendar

secrets. This 3-hour exploration will include a shore walk, a water quality survey, and a 90-minute canoe trip on Goshen Pond. After the tour, we'll head to Zinc Café for some gourmet American food.

• \$125 including canoe tour, dinner and transportation; space limited



## 27th Annual Tex Mex 5K Race for Open Space Wednesday, June 22 7:00pm

Come for the race and stay for the Party-Under-the-Stars. Register to run the race or volunteer and enjoy dinner, music and a Tex Mex margarita. Form a Green Ribbon Team and enjoy your private buffet and margaritas under the shade of the Big Top Tent.



## Moths - The Silent Majority Friday, June 24 7:00pm

Back by popular demand! Discover the mysterious creatures of the night that fly under the cover of darkness with Blaine Rothauser, a lifetime naturalist and biologist who is President of BR Environmental Services. Learn about the variety of moths and butterflies found in the Wissahickon Watershed.

• Fee: Members Free; Non-members \$10/adult



## Butterfly Walk Saturday, June 25 10:00am

• Willow Lake Farm

Join Blaine Rothauser to discover the many varieties of butterflies that might be found in the meadows of Willow Lake Farm. A brief talk about meadow ecology will be followed by a natural history tour and adventure.

• Fee: Members Free; Non-members \$10/adult



## Exploring Nature

With **WVWA Naturalist, Margaret Rohde**. Explore WVWA preserves and discover hidden treasures found throughout the watershed.

### Bird Walk at Willow Lake Farm

Saturday, May 14 • 8:00am

### Bird Banding at Crossways

Members Only

Saturday, June 11 • 8:30am

### Bird Walk at Willow Lake Farm

Sunday, June 26 • 8:00am

### Nature Stroll at Four Mills Reserve

Saturday, May 14 • 1:30pm

### Nature Stroll at Crossways Preserve

Saturday, June 26 • 1:30pm



## Evans-Mumbower Mill 2016 Open House Events

Programs are free of charge unless otherwise noted.

All events are 1:00 – 4:00pm

Details at [wwa.org/evansmill](http://wwa.org/evansmill)

### Season Opener

Sunday, April 17

Take a tour of Montgomery County's only water-powered gristmill.

### Welsh Heritage Celebration

Sunday, May 15

Enjoy displays and traditions from early Welsh and Germanic Pennsylvania from the Welsh Valley Preservation Society for Towamencin.

### Antique Fire Truck Show

Sunday, June 19

Bring Dad (and Mom too!) to see a variety of antique fire trucks for Father's Day.

### Old Fashioned Ice Cream Social

Sunday, July 17

Take a break from the heat and join us for a cool treat.

• Adults: \$5; Children 3-12: \$3

## 2016 Biennial Wissahickon Photo Contest



This year, the Wissahickon Valley Watershed Association (WVWA) is teaming up with Friends of the Wissahickon (FOW) to present the Biennial Photo Contest.

All photos entered in the contest must be taken within Wissahickon Valley Park, along the Green Ribbon Trail, or on one of the WVWA managed preserves. Participants may enter up to four photos taken within the last three years.

• Complete rules and other details at [fow.org](http://fow.org).

• Deadline for submissions: October 14, 2016

Details & registration for all events at [wwa.org/calendar](http://wwa.org/calendar)

All events are free of charge unless otherwise noted.

# WVWA Welcomes New Staff

By Dennis O. Miranda

**Laurie Grant**, our new Director of Institutional Advancement (formerly Director of Development) joined us in February 2016. Formerly the Assistant Vice President, Development & Alumni Engagement, for Widener University, Delaware Law School since 2012, Laurie comes to us with over 25 years in philanthropic development in a leadership role. Her strategic thinking, marketing and proven track record in fundraising and senior management experience poises WVWA to meet the challenges of growing and diversifying our varied audiences and stakeholders for the future. Laurie will manage WVWA's Institutional Advancement team, which includes the full spectrum of fundraising, membership, marketing, communications and event planning.

**Rachel Rosenfeld** started as WVWA's new Administrative Assistant in January 2016. Rachel is well known to WVWA, she has been an enthusiastic Creek Watcher since 2014 and was featured in the February 2015 issue of Grid Magazine. Formerly the Stream Watch Coordinator for the Lower Merion Conservancy, Rachel possesses a Master Watershed Steward Certificate from Penn State Cooperative Extension College of Agricultural Sciences.

**Scott Berman** joined WVWA as our Open Space Policy Intern in February 2016. This part-time internship is a research role focusing on the state of open space preservation in Montgomery County and the Wissahickon Creek watershed specifically. With a sharp intellect and political familiarity, Scott is comfortable digging deep into this policy arena.



Lisa Hansell

Left to right: Laurie Grant, Rachel Rosenfeld, Scott Berman.

## New (& Returning) Board Members

By Gina Craigo

**The WVWA Board of Directors grew by three** at the Annual Meeting on January 13, 2016. Members approved the slate of candidates, which included Sara Hertz and John Tierney as new directors and Nancy Kreider returning to the board.

**Sara Hertz** will be serving her first term on the Board of Directors. Sara joined the WVWA Development Committee in 2015. She brings a background in conservation and is currently the VP of Principal and Major



Gifts at Conservation International and previously worked at the Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia Zoo and The Nature Conservancy. Sara is an Ambler Borough resident and was recently elected as a Council Member for the Ambler Borough. Additionally, she helped initiate and serves

on the Steering Committee for the Ambler Farmers' Market.

**John Tierney** will also be serving his first term on the Board of Directors and joined the Development Committee in 2015. John has been the captain for the winning Tex Mex 5k Green Ribbon



Team since 2011. A resident of North Wales, John is a retired CPA and partner of Ernst and Young. He serves on the Accounting Advisory Board of the Smeal

College of Business of The Pennsylvania State University and The Mentorship Task Force of Smeal and recently joined the Board of The Global Give Back Circle.

**Nancy Kreider** is returning to the Board of Directors after having rotated off for the mandatory one-year period. Nancy was first elected to the board in 2006 and has been instrumental in the success



of the WVWA's Education Programs. Nancy lives in Whippen Township and also serves on the Education and Water Resources Committees. Nancy volunteers as a WVWA Creek Watcher and can be found helping out at many events including the Maple Sugaring Festival, Walk on the Wild Side, Tex Mex 5k and many more.



# VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT: Harm Scherpbier



By Madalyn Neff

**W**WVA is very grateful for its dedicated and diverse volunteers. Harm Scherpbier is one such volunteer. Harm's history with the Green Ribbon Trail and the WVWA spans nearly three decades. After moving to Fort Washington from the Netherlands in 1988 with his wife Titia, the first thing Harm did was search for a place to hike and - lucky for WVWA - he found the Green Ribbon Trail. Almost 30 years later, Harm and Titia are still hiking those trails. Harm said, "Since I loved the trails, I wanted to find out more about the organization that's making all that possible - so I got to know WVWA. I was on the Land Management Committee for several years and now chair the Trail Stewards Committee."

**Trail Stewards** are a dedicated group of 35 volunteers who manage and maintain 24 miles of WVWA trails. They are responsible for clearing fallen trees, fixing broken signs, cleaning up trash and whatever else may need done to keep the trails open for the public. "We get together to keep the momentum going - and to learn from each other. The goal is to encourage more people in our area to be aware of the trails, use the trails, and benefit from having such a great trail system right where they live," said Harm.

**Trail Stewards are also** ambassadors for the WVWA. After years of working closely with the organization, Harm said, "I love the mission and work of the WVWA - open space in our area, for hiking and running. It's great for our physical and mental health and it's great for the environment. We need to take our kids and our neighbors there." It is this passion that has made Harm such an important member of the WVWA

From left to right: Mieke, Harm, Titia, Bart and Gerben Scherpbier - at Yellowstone, where Gerben is a NPS Park Ranger, his job inspired by our family trail hikes.

family. His congenial and appreciative nature makes him the perfect leader for the Trail Stewards. "I really want to thank the wonderful trail stewards for their behind the scenes work to maintain this trail."

**Each WVWA volunteer** brings unique values as a result of his or her personal and professional experiences. Harm received his MD in the Netherlands and a Masters Degree in Medical Informatics and currently works as an independent consultant for health IT firms. He and his wife take every opportunity to hike, bike, run, ski, camp, garden and take care of their chickens and vegetables on their "mini farm."

**As a true WVWA** ambassador, Harm wants to "encourage everyone to join the hikes organized by the Trail Stewards - and when they come to a hike, please bring a neighbor who may not be familiar with the trails, so they learn and start exploring." 🌿

## Trail Steward Hikes

**Come see the ins and outs** of our trails through the eyes of the Trail Stewards. Starting this spring, our volunteers will lead three sessions to explore our trails. Details on our website - [wvwa.org/calendar](http://wvwa.org/calendar)

**Ambler Connection**  
Sunday, April 24 - 4:00pm

**Green Ribbon Trail & GA's Wetlands**  
Tuesday, June 7 - 6:30pm

**Four Mills Wissahickon Hike**  
Sunday, Sept. 11 - 10:00am



## Our Mission

The Wissahickon Valley Watershed Association's Mission is to protect the quality and beauty of the Wissahickon Creek and to enhance life in the watershed by:

- *Protecting and enhancing open space*
- *Promoting awareness of environmental issues through education*
- *Promoting wise land use*
- *Preserving historic sites important to the history of the Wissahickon*

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# 27TH ANNUAL Tex Mex 5k Race for Open Space **WEDNESDAY JUNE 22, 2016**



**Come for the Race & Stay for the Party-Under-the-Stars.** Enjoy dinner, music and Tex Mex's famous Margaritas!

**Registration open April 1  
[www.org/texmex5k](http://www.org/texmex5k)**

## Green Ribbon Fundraising Teams Wanted!

- Dine in the shade under the Big Top Tent
- Enjoy flavored, frozen Margaritas & craft beer until 9:00pm
- Buffet Dinner
- Private porta-potties
- A place to store your belongings during the race
- Sombreros and team photos

**Details at - [www.org/texmex5k/greenribbonteam](http://www.org/texmex5k/greenribbonteam)**

or contact Lisa Hansell for more information - [lisa@wvwa.org](mailto:lisa@wvwa.org).