

Wildlife Activist

Spring 2023

No. 90

LGNC Celebrates 20 Years of Conservation



Lehigh Gap Nature Center Administration and Management

The day-to-day operations of Lehigh Gap Nature Center are managed by Chad Schwartz, Executive Director; Riley Davenport, Education & Outreach Coordinator; and Lauren Foltz, Office Administrator. Governance of the organization rests with the volunteer Board of Directors. A Board of Advisors serves in various advisory capacities on an as-needed basis to the staff and the Board of Directors.

Many thanks to our dedicated volunteers!

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Wildlife Activist

A Newsletter Devoted to Wildlife and Habitat
Protection and Restoration at Lehigh Gap on the
Kittatinny Ridge and Beyond.

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Prairie Warbler, original painting by Brad Kunkle

Front Cover: "Journey," an original watercolor by Lee Kunkle depicting our conservation journey at LGNC. The painting features the Osprey, our spirit animal and logo symbol; the habitat gardens, representing LGNC's ecological rebirth; the Osprey House, representing education, research, and outdoor recreation on the Refuge; and volunteers, the lifeblood of LGNC. Our journey continues.

Back Cover: "Transformation," a collage of photos show the evolution of LGNC from a barren moonscape to a vibrant nature center.

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President's Column

by Diane Husic

It was the early 1990s when my husband Dave and I were driving along Route 248 and came through the Lehigh Gap from the south and I had my first view of the devastated landscape. It was shocking. At that time, I didn't know the history of the area. What I did know was that we lived about 20 miles to the northeast on the same mountainside, and it certainly wasn't devoid of vegetation there. Little did I know then that my professional and personal life would become so intertwined with that denuded site.

Years later, Dave and I were involved with a grant project aimed at increasing student interest in plant science. I had heard some vague reports of plants being used to remediate the site I had first seen about a decade earlier. Some poking around and good fortune brought me in contact with Dan Kunkle during the 2004-2005 academic year. That summer, just a year after the Lehigh Gap Wildlife Refuge officially opened, we brought a group of students and faculty from several institutions to visit the site for the first time. Dan shared some of the history of the smelter operations, but more importantly, he told us about the revegetation ideas that were being tested at the site. I distinctly

recall scrambling over loose rocks to see emerging grass seedlings while worrying that someone in our group would twist an ankle!

“Restoring land without restoring relationship is an empty exercise. It is relationship that will endure and relationship that will sustain the restored land. Therefore, reconnecting people and the landscape is as essential as reestablishing proper hydrology or cleaning up contaminants. It is medicine for the earth.”

-Robin Wall Kimmerer

This is one of my favorite passages Kimmerer’s book *Braiding Sweetgrass*. It speaks to an important aspect of the work of the Lehigh Gap Nature Center – how the greening of a mountainside has connected people to each other and to the landscape. That first visit to the site in 2005 launched a new area of research for me and rejuvenated my love of science. The opportunities to learn, investigate, and better understand restoration processes and adaptive management (coping with surprises in science, land management, and life) have been transformative for many students over the years.

Equally important are the new collaborations and friendships that have been sown and nurtured – with other researchers, agency and nonprofit organization partners, students and young naturalists, and community members who have been involved in caring about the site over the past two decades. Together, we entered into a unique relationship with the land at this place and witnessed the amazing resiliency of nature. We have been blessed with the chance to heal a landscape and given the gift of hope. With the array of environmental challenges facing our planet and humanity, hopefulness is too often in short supply.

Dan has often talked about being confronted with “insurmountable opportunities.” Christiana Figueres, the former Secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, promotes the importance of “stubborn optimism.” In an era where our youth experience the impacts of ecoanxiety and climate grief, stories of hope are needed more than ever. We must embrace the mindset that challenges lead to important new opportunities. And boy, do we need more stubborn optimists to counter the naysayers and doom and gloom forecasts.

Many of the human connections made through the Lehigh Gap Nature Center were temporarily severed during the global pandemic. Board members and staff could only meet virtually. It was difficult to get students and researchers out in the field. Volunteers and members are the lifeblood of a grassroots membership organization, and COVID impacted their sense of community, too. As the Board and staff worked on the 2022-26 Strategic Framework, we were cognizant of the need to rekindle these critical human connections. Going forward, we are deeply committed to:

- *Further developing our volunteer base and the partnerships that are critical for both the sustainability of the LGNC (the physical center and the organization), and the ongoing stewardship of the Refuge, the neighboring Kittatinny Ridge, and the Lehigh River Watershed (i.e., our mission).*
- *Celebrating our members, accomplishments, and milestones such as the 20th anniversary of the opening of the Refuge.*
- *Growing our endowment and garnering the necessary resources to best serve and reconnect our community and to inspire and mentor the next generation of conservation leaders and stubborn optimists.*
- *Finding new ways to share the hopeful message that the LGNC represents and to add new chapters of hope to this story.*

As we mark the 20th anniversary of the Refuge, I invite you to join us in the celebration and the rejuvenating work needed to achieve these goals. 🌿

Diane White Husic, LGNC Board President

Diane W. Husic





Twenty Years at **Lehigh Gap Nature Center**

by Dan R. Kunkle and Chad I. Schwartz

In 1986, Donald Heintzelman and Ben Sinclair co-founded an organization called the Wildlife Information Center, Inc. (WIC) to advocate for the protection of wildlife and habitat. The organization was housed in Heintzelman's home, and he hoped it would eventually support the Bake Oven

Knob Autumn Hawk Count that he founded in 1961. By 1990, Heintzelman envisioned eventually acquiring a small farm or piece of land to establish a nature center and headquarters for WIC, and he began raising money for a "Land Fund" to help with the purchase.

2003 —  — **2023**

By the time Don retired from the organization in 1998, we had raised \$47,500 for the Land Fund. That sum had reached \$109,000 by the time we began purchasing properties to create what became known as the Lehigh Gap Wildlife Refuge. That was used to make a nice down payment on our first purchase, which was an old wooden clapboard home and about 14.5 acres of land. As Bob Hoopes, Kathie Romano and Dan Kunkle walked up to the home to make a cold call asking the owners to sell, an Osprey circled over the Lehigh River in front of the home and dove for a fish. A good omen. We started calling it the Osprey House, and the name stuck.

In December 2002, we purchased the home and moved all of our possessions from the office we rented on Main Street in Slatinton to the Osprey House, our new office and headquarters. Over the next few months, we purchased the remaining two large properties, and the 756-acre Lehigh Gap Wildlife Refuge was born. Of course, the land was heavily impacted by 80 years of pollution from zinc smelting, and some of this land was completely barren and part of the Palmerton Superfund site.

Something we realized early on was that the New Jersey Zinc Company was very good to their workers and the town and very responsible. They used the best technology available in their time to control the pollution from their smokestacks. We chose not to assign blame, but instead to work with Viacom, the heir to the responsibility for the clean-up, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) to fix the problem and restore functioning ecosystems to the land.

On May 3, 2003, we dedicated our Refuge and opened it to the public. So here we are, twenty years later, wondering how two decades have passed so quickly since that bright sunny day twenty years ago. The **timeline on pages 34-39** features highlights of the milestones, successes, and transitions along the way.

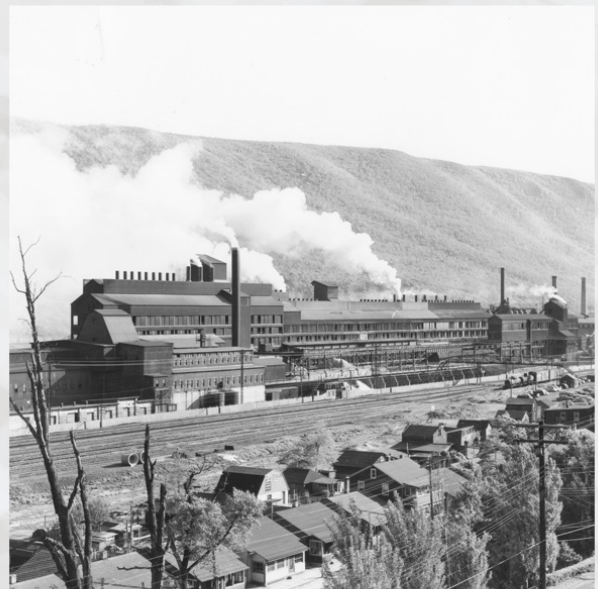
In this essay, we will be sharing excerpts of some of the articles published in our unique publication, *Wildlife Activist*, that documented our history, our achievements, and our hopes for the future along the way.

Looking Back: *Superfund to Super Habitat*

The Lehigh Gap has long been a focal point for human activity, beginning with the earliest Indigenous populations. In addition to providing a natural passageway through the Kittatinny Ridge, the Gap's proximity to the coal fields placed it at the epicenter of the Industrial Revolution. By the early 20th century, the Gap was home to a canal, three railroads, and a slew of factories.

Once such factory, the New Jersey Zinc Company (NJZ), relocated its zinc smelting operations to Carbon County in 1898. NJZ played an important role in the local economy and produced some of the world's highest quality zinc and zinc byproducts. Unfortunately, lacking modern pollution controls, the factory severely impacted the surrounding landscape. Eight decades of acid rain and heavy metal deposition led to the designation of a 3,000-acre Superfund site in 1983.

The creation of the Lehigh Gap Wildlife Refuge in 2003 launched a new era of regrowth and healing in the Gap. In revegetating a barren mountainside, LGNC established the first and only nature center in the U.S. on a Superfund site.



*New Jersey Zinc Company
Circa 1950*



Part I: A Refuge is Born



The Summer/Fall 2002 *Activist* documents the continued activity of the Wildlife Information Center, such as testifying at a township meeting against a proposed luxury auto racetrack and resort (Alpine Rose) on the Kittatinny Ridge, our participation in the Kittatinny Coalition, and the fundraising taking place to purchase the Refuge land. In that issue, Bob Hoopes wrote “Lehigh Gap Restoration Project: A Dream Coming True,” laying out our vision for what we planned to do at the Gap. In this article, Bob wrote:

“For years, for some a lifetime, many have dreamed of a day when the Kittatinny Ridge opposite Palmerton, degraded by decades of industrial pollution from zinc smelting, would once again be covered in lush green vegetation. In 1984, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) declared it so and hopes soared. But the years dragged on. Today the dream is closer to reality than ever before. The Lehigh Gap Restoration Project will boldly accelerate the recovery of this land, working in partnership with Mother Nature, local communities, governments, and corporations.

“....But how to do it? The Wildlife Information Center’s ten-year Land Fund had raised \$100,000. A mighty sum for a small, member-supported wildlife conservation organization...but only 5%of the funds needed to secure the land and endow a sustaining

stewardship. The answer, like a beautiful rainbow, opened up before us in a meeting at the Center in February [2002]. Bill Mineo, the Stewardship and Trail Manager for the Delaware and Lehigh National Heritage Corridor and a veteran of similar projects, laid out the process for us. Bill offered to guide us in writing a Master Site Plan and in submitting grant proposals to the state Department of Conservation and Natural Resources as well as to foundations and corporations.

A Unique Location

“....The Appalachian Trail (AT) and the Delaware & Lehigh (D&L) National Heritage Corridor Trail along the Lehigh River intersect at the Route 873 bridge over the Lehigh River....This confluence also marks the Wildlife Center’s new headquarters site and the easternmost point of the land being acquired by the Center. The foot traffic on the AT and D&L trails, plus the vehicle traffic on Routes 873 and 248 provide excellent visibility for the project and ready visitor access.

Long Term Vision

“The Wildlife Information Center has a vision for restoring this land and establishing a major ecotourism facility....We envision working with nature, which is already reclaiming the land on its own, to accelerate the return of native, natural vegetation in the Gap. In

addition, we plan to develop a nature and education center with recreational trails and lookouts, a facility housing interpretive displays, and space for educational programs for the public. Finally, we will use the entire Lehigh Gap area as an outdoor classroom.

“Conditions on the most degraded part of the mountainside are severe. Little soil remains and the barren mountainside is dry, windswept, suffering severe cold and extreme heat, and periodically subject to fire. While it is difficult to imagine that any plant could survive here, nature has developed plants that thrive in such conditions – warm-season grasses. An interesting possibility exists for the establishment of...a grassland or savanna type of ecosystem....Other pioneers – grasses, gray birch, sassafras, green briar, and pitch pine to name a few – are already moving into the less contaminated areas and have begun the process of primary succession that will eventually lead to a restored ecosystem.

“...The cornerstone of our restoration plan will be the use of native, warm-season (prairie) grasses. They extend roots deeply underground and are very drought tolerant. They take up the heavy metals (that contaminate the site) far more slowly than most plant life, and they build soil over time. They will stabilize the soil and provide a foundation for ecological succession. ...Meanwhile, we will enhance the grasses with other species such as native sunflowers.

Things to Come

“...There is still so much of the story to be written. Once we catch our collective breath from the land deals and financial struggles, we will turn our attention to the land itself. It will be a slow process, one measured in years, for sure. But the annual progress will be visible, the community involvement significant, and the public use and enjoyment of this wonderful natural resource will be secured forever.”

As you can see, the vision Bob laid out was a dream that actually came true in the next 20 years.

Dan Kunkle’s Executive Director’s message in the Spring 2003 *Activist* asks and answers a question that was being asked by a lot of people, but it was articulated to us by our U.S. Congressman, Paul Kanjorski. The title of the message is telling: “Doing the Impossible.”

“State Representative Keith McCall arranged for Northeast PA Congressman Paul Kanjorski to visit us in February [2003] to learn about the Center’s Lehigh Gap Restoration Project. After almost an hour of hearing about what we are doing, he stopped and asked, ‘How



The Moonscape
2003

could so much be accomplished in just a year?’ A similar question arose at a public presentation I did – ‘How can a group with a \$30,000 a year budget and no paid staff succeed in a project whose acquisition costs alone are over \$900,000?’ The answer is complex.

“...My answer to Congressman Kanjorski’s question was, ‘It was the right project, at the right place, at the right time.’ That’s why we have such strong support from our members and our partners. That’s why what should be an impossible task for a group our size will succeed. That’s why we are doing the impossible!”

Back then, Dan was reading a book by the environmental activist David Brower and adopted a motto from his book – “We are confronted by insurmountable opportunities!” We didn’t worry about what others thought was possible. We confronted every problem or challenge as an opportunity to succeed. And succeed we did!

Hoopas picked up his pen again in 2003 and wrote “From Idea to Reality: The Wildlife Center’s 2002 Transition.”

“2002 was a pivotal year for the Wildlife Center. Both the short-term and long-term focus of the organization radically changed as a result of the past year’s events. Early in the year, the Board of Directors conceived a bold strategy focusing attention on Lehigh

Gap and the degraded landscape on the north side of the Blue Mountain.”

“....The power of imagination is enormous. When we first discussed the concept of acquiring land in the Lehigh Gap, the Board ignored the reasons why the concept would not work...and there were many, including the huge acquisition costs. But our imagination powered us to a new level of what could be. What if we could secure the land, restore it, protect its wildlife and habitat, and open it to the public for recreation? What if we could create a legacy that would carry forth into future generations? A legacy about reversing the ravages of the industrial revolution in one small part of our planet Earth – a powerful message to groups elsewhere that live with a degraded landscape.”

Bob went on to explain how we became involved with U.S. EPA and the responsible party, Viacom International, in the Superfund restoration process. Relying on advice and mentoring from Bill Mineo and U.S. Department of Agriculture warm-season grass expert John Dickerson, who had become our main restoration advisor, we proposed a restoration plan that was adopted by Viacom and approved by EPA.

In the Summer 2003 issue of the *Activist*, we documented the first year’s progress with the planting of warm-season grasses on the barren slopes, as well as the growth of our organization with the purchase of the land and its restoration. In his Director’s message, Dan wrote:

“The value of the Lehigh Gap Wildlife Refuge and the Osprey House to our members and to the growth and health of our organization is enormous. The Board surely made the correct decision to go ahead with the Osprey House purchase. As Bob Hoopes pointed out at our opening ceremony in May, it was like the Hagar the Horrible cartoon in which Lucky Eddie was building a bridge over a chasm with no support below and asked Hagar what was holding this thing up. Hagar’s response was, ‘Don’t worry about it, just keep nailing.’ We have built a tremendous bridge for our organization as we ‘just kept nailing.’ Thanks for all your support. Come visit the Osprey House and the refuge any time.”

The Osprey House became a sort of clubhouse for our members, and the Refuge was a playground for our birder and naturalist members. Bob Hoopes talked about the wonderful discoveries we made in that first year on the Refuge in his article titled “Lehigh Gap Refuge is Open for Business.”

“As spring 2003 arrived, struggling to break the long, cold grip of winter, our first as caretakers of the new Lehigh Gap Wildlife Refuge, we expected ‘spring things’ to happen, but we were not sure what. Like children waiting for Christmas morning, we impatiently wished ‘snow be gone and migration begin.’ We wanted to enjoy the presents hidden for us around the refuge. And disappointed we were not!!”

He went on to talk about many of the sightings and new finds by our members, including Common Mergansers (a kind of river duck) nesting in the old unused chimney of the Osprey House – something for which we could not find previous documentation. Bob’s article also includes the first list of Refuge mammals and birds. His last paragraph encouraged more of our members to come out and enjoy the Refuge and to report their findings. Thus, we could already see the culture of member ownership and volunteerism being woven into the fabric of our new nature center.

*“So as the title of this article indicates, the Lehigh Gap Wildlife Refuge is open for business! Come out for a visit and enjoy! Let us know what you see, and we will keep you posted in future *Activists* and our website on all of the wildlife activity on the refuge. It’s a great place to spend an hour or the whole day. See you at the refuge!!”*



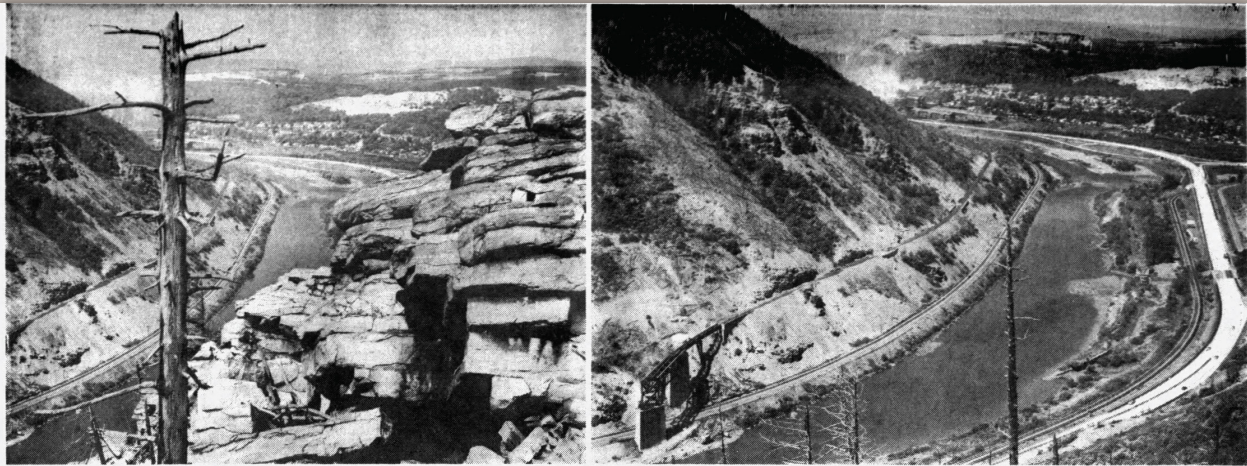
*The Original Osprey House
2003*

Looking Back: It Began with an Idea

Although the Lehigh Gap Wildlife Refuge was established in 2003, the idea of creating a nature center in the Gap dates back much earlier. In the late 1960s, future LGNC Board member Grant White, then the Director of the Lehigh County Cultural Center, saw great potential in the denuded mountainside surrounding Palmerton. Recognizing the rich ecological, geological, and cultural significance of the Lehigh Gap, White was the earliest advocate for

restoring and establishing an educational center on the present-day Superfund site.

The article below, published in *The Morning Call* on September 9, 1968, is perhaps the earliest record of this big idea. In time, most of White's vision became a reality – from the revegetation of the mountain, to the establishment of a trail system, interpretive center, and education program. White himself played an integral role in the founding and development of LGNC.



Mountaintop views of sandstone outcrop and Lehigh River flowing south through gap attest to rugged beauty marred, to some extent, by erosion on western slope.

Lehigh Water Gap Regarded as Long-Neglected Natural Wonder

Says Grant L. White, director of the cultural center located at 501 Hamilton St., Allentown, "The gap area concentrates all the past problems of man in dealing with his environment and many future possibilities for coming to harmonious terms with current aspects of his environment."

He adds, "And the gap has natural phenomena that are not duplicated in any other part of the river valley, and which can be exploited from both an educational and recreational approach, as well as for conservation and reclamation to restore its natural beauty. Use of the gap as a pilot area may focus attention on similar problems and solutions in the entire river area."

If you have the physical stamina to keep up with White as he goes clambering up an 800-foot-high slope of the Appalachian Trail, he'll point out

many places in the gap area suitable for development. Among some of the ideas bouncing around in his creative noggin are these:

- Construction of an interpretive center, accessible by car, where visitors can be educated about the historic and cultural values of the region.

- Establishment of a dozen or more nature and geologic hiking trails, all radiating from an information lodge. Supplied with a brief and inexpensive booklet on the rock formations, for example, parents could take their children on geologic tours well marked with explanatory signs.

- Development of camping and picnic areas overlooking the river and use of an abandoned railroad bed as a parking overlook or link in a scenic drive to be constructed at a later stage.

- Restoration of west bank

tannery and of the former Lehigh Gap timber bridge's toll house on east bank.

- Creation of one or more recreation sites on the gap slopes at Slatington, and continuation of improvement work on the old canal segment at Walnutport.

- Restoration of the battered old mansion built on a red shale knob high above Palmerton by Union Army Gen. Elisha G. Marshall in 1881. Commanding a breathtaking view of the river to the North, and easily reached by road, the restored home could be utilized as a museum and contain exhibits spanning the entire history of the area.

What kind of financing would fruition of these dreams require?

"Let's say that \$1 million would be a real good start," White replied.

The first steps in the restoration of the mountainside at our Refuge began in the spring of 2003 with the planting of 56 one-acre test plots with warm-season grasses, the innovative method that we proposed based on the advice of Mineo and Dickerson and put into practice by Viacom's contractors. In that same Summer 2003 *Activist*, Kunkle documented the progress of the restoration in an article titled "Watching Grass Grow."

"The green that can be seen on the Kittatinny on the Lehigh Gap Wildlife Refuge is a very hopeful beginning of a process that will produce a grassland habitat that will benefit many species of wildlife. This grassland will build fertile soil and form the basis for natural ecological succession. We have a long way to go, but the first steps are very encouraging. Watching grass grow has never been so exciting!"

The 2004 issues of *Wildlife Activist* continued to document our progress with the restoration and fundraising for the land purchases. Firsts were also documented, including: the first field trips from local schools; the first college field trip, professor Sally Willig's graduate landscape architecture class from the University of Pennsylvania; Allentown Hiking Club's first efforts to help us build the trails on the Refuge; and the first awards, The Karl Mason Award from the PA Association of Environmental Professionals and the Friend of the Lehigh River Award from Wildlands Conservancy. Monitoring of the growth of the grasses continued,

while full-scale planting of our barren lands would have to wait for another year of monitoring before it could continue in 2006.

In January 2005, the Lehigh Gap Master Site Plan was published, laying out three phases for the project: 1) acquire the land; 2) restore vegetation on the barren slopes; and 3) turn the Refuge into an environmental education center with infrastructure and programs, as well as an outdoor recreation site with trails. It called for a capital campaign to raise the \$3 million needed. It also called for an ecological assessment of the Refuge lands to provide a baseline assessment of the resources on the Refuge that would inform future management. That summer, we started the native plant habitat garden project, conceived and led by volunteer Linda Frederick. By autumn, all the funds had been raised to pay off the land purchases (almost \$1 million), and planning for the capital campaign began.

By spring of 2006, U.S. EPA gave us the green light, and Viacom International, the responsible party, began full-scale planting on the Refuge. Using tractors and spreaders and crop-duster airplanes, all the barren areas were planted with our special mix of native grasses. Meanwhile, the Board had hired architect Michael Jonn of Allentown to begin working with us to draw up plans for a new visitor and education center that would expand the existing Osprey House.



In 2003, 56 one-acre experimental test plots were planted in an effort to determine the best mix of native seed and soil amendment. Some of the original test plot signs can still be seen on the Refuge today.

Along with the changes on the land, the organization was also changing. Several years before, Kunkle had resigned as President of the Board of Directors, and the Board appointed him as Executive Director to run the day-to-day operations of the Wildlife Information Center and our Refuge, with the Board serving as his boss. Now we needed a name that reflected our land ownership and new location, as well as our mission. In 2006, we registered with the Pennsylvania Bureau of Charities to do business as *Lehigh Gap Nature Center*.

In the Summer 2006 edition of *Wildlife Activist*, Diane Husic described the habitat gardens with their boulders as a reflection of the mountain and compared the transition of the planted gardens to the restoration of the mountainside. Emphasizing that it is an experiment, she wrote,

“Through our experimentation, hopefully we can teach future generations about the importance of plants in our lives – not only for their beauty and value for food, medicines, and oxygen production but for their role in habitat restoration....in healing what humans have disturbed since the beginning of the industrial revolution.”

That summer, we were also honored with a national award in conjunction with our valued partner, the D&L National Heritage Corridor. The Collaborative Conservation Partnership

Award was presented to the D&L Corridor and Lehigh Gap Nature Center for collaborating on the Lehigh Gap Restoration Project. Joe DiBello of the National Park Service presented the award saying,

“Hundreds of nominations for the award were submitted this year from throughout the country, but only 13 were selected to receive the award. This project is being held up as a national example.”

LGNC was on the map – not just the local map, but it was now recognized as nationally significant. That autumn in the *Activist*, Dan wrote an article about how LGNC had become a research hub for all our academic and government agency partners, and that we were collaborating in still more partnerships.

While the restoration work and habitat gardens projects were our major conservation initiatives during this period, other parts of our program were developing simultaneously. Education was, and still is, the largest part of our programming. By 2004, we had established the Lehigh Gap Environmental Education Partnership with several of the local school districts. Instead of creating programs *for* the schools, we met with administrators and teachers and created programs *with* them so we could help meet their needs. We began both field trips to our site, as well as in-school programs for K-12



The full-scale revegetation of the Refuge was approved by the EPA and Viacom International in 2006. Tractors and spreaders and crop-duster airplanes spread seed and soil amendment on the rocky slopes.



Educating Refuge Visitors
2005

schools and colleges. Volunteer Loretta Fair, a retired biology teacher, helped Dan in developing our programs for the schools.

Our work with the colleges went beyond field trips and education programs as we began partnering to perform research to help inform the management of the Refuge. Numerous interns, both graduates and undergraduates, from Moravian, Lehigh, and other Lehigh Valley schools carried out research projects on the Refuge. Those academic partnerships have been maintained and have given us valuable data as we help to train the next generation of scientists at the Refuge.

Our first infrastructure project from the Master Site Plan was completed in the summer of 2005, when Nick Smith led the construction of a pavilion funded by the Rotary Club of Slatington. This was another volunteer-led project, and another long-term partnership was established with the club.

Finally, the Allentown Hiking Club had adopted LGNC and worked with us to create and maintain our trail system. With their help and the leadership of Jim Gabovitz, our Refuge was becoming a hiking destination for folks from a 100-mile radius.

By this time, volunteers had become essential to our operations. With groups like those working on trails and our habitat gardens, and individuals such as Fair and Kathie Romano helping to develop and run our education programs, the vital role of volunteers at Lehigh Gap had become established and remains part of our culture.

Five years after we began the planning to purchase land in the Lehigh Gap for our Refuge, Bob Hoopes authored another article in *Wildlife Activist*. In “Five Years Ago and Back to the Future,” Bob said:

“It is hard to believe that five years have passed since we developed a plan to turn a federal Superfund site into a public nature park at Lehigh Gap. Looking back, we are awed by the progress we made in these five years. Looking ahead, we are inspired by the opportunities before us.”

Bob went on to describe the highlights of all that had happened since Board member Grant White proposed that we purchase the land in the Lehigh Gap and create our environmental education center there. In his conclusion, he wrote:

“Five years later we are still at it, pushing the envelope, aiming high, making a difference. We could walk away today and our legacy of saving and revegetating the mountain would be secure. But we have more than 200 new members and most of our original members cheering us on. We have the community excited about the new recreation and education center in their midst. And we have plans for the next five years....Hope to see you at the refuge!”

Those plans included continuing and expanding our conservation work on our Refuge and the Kittatinny Ridge; our education programs that now spanned pre-K through graduate school, as well as programs for the public of all ages; and our research partnerships with the academic community. But our major focus now turned to our capital campaign and building the infrastructure we had envisioned as phase three of our Master Site Plan. Phases one and two, purchasing the land and revegetating the barren areas, had already been achieved.

The capital campaign, with a \$3 million goal for infrastructure, programs, and endowment, began with a behind-the-scenes quiet phase in 2007. At the urging of several potential funders, we

engaged a fundraising professional, Ed Newcomb of Secor Associates, to help us run our capital campaign. By winter, the campaign was in full swing. In Dan's Director's message in the Fall/Winter 2007 edition of the *Activist*, he wrote,

"At our recent reception at PPL headquarters in Allentown, our friend and supporter Bert Daday welcomed the guests and spoke about his support for the project he calls 'The Miracle of Lehigh Gap.' Mr. Daday was referring to the restoration of a barren wasteland, but he is also referring to the group of dedicated volunteers who raised nearly a million dollars to buy the land and who have worked to create the Lehigh Gap Nature Center.

"That we were able to come this far is a miracle. It is a miracle that so many dedicated people would devote their time and talent to this amazing project. It is a miracle that so many people would give generously to help us achieve our goals. It is a miracle that we have had the advice of a few excellent advisors, and that we listened to them when many of the 'experts' told us our restoration methods would never work. Now we are looking for one more miracle [raising the funds for a new visitor and education center]."

Charlie Root, site manager for the Palmerton Superfund site at U.S. EPA, spoke next saying that this was "the most satisfying project of my entire career." PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) Secretary Michael DiBerardinis also spoke at that reception, comparing the vision of LGNC's

leaders to that of Gifford Pinchot and Joseph Rothrock, who preserved and reforested much of the Commonwealth's clear-cut land. He said he was proud that his agency was an "early investor" in the project.

The project to build a visitor and education center was developed in five successive stages so that, as funds became available for a stage, we could proceed without having to raise all the funds for the entire project. The first stage, begun in 2007, was the construction of a loop road and parking area around the new Osprey House to better accommodate buses and the larger numbers of visitors that we anticipated.

Meanwhile, other work continued with another major accomplishment being the publication of what became part one of our Lehigh Gap Wildlife Refuge Ecological Assessment. The assessment, carried out by contractors Roger Latham, Claudia Steckel, and Dave Steckel, mapped our plant communities, identified plant, moth, lichen, and other species present, and identified hazards, challenges, and opportunities on the Refuge. It laid the groundwork for further assessment work and for future research on our site.

Also in 2007, we held our first Research Roundtable, gathering 27 research partners from academia and government agencies at Moravian College, hosted by Diane Husic. It was the first formal meeting of many of the people involved with us in research at Lehigh Gap Nature Center.

2007





Part II: The Second Five Years – A Time to Build



May 2008 marked the fifth anniversary of the opening of the Lehigh Gap Wildlife Refuge to the public. The campaign to raise funds to continue our infrastructure projects was in high gear, along with an incredible amount of other activity. Anita Collins started working with our Naturalist Club on a project to identify the native bees present at the Refuge. Plans were being made for other projects, which, along with the native bees, would be subjects of study for part two of the Lehigh Gap Wildlife Refuge Ecological Assessment. And as Executive Director, Dan Kunkle, was selected for the Audubon/Toyota *TogetherGreen* Fellowship, LGNC received more national recognition for our innovative work.

While the Achieve the Vision campaign continued, we were fighting some mighty headwinds. The U.S. economy, indeed the international economy, tanked with huge losses in the stock market and the accounts of foundations

and businesses, as well as inflation and high gasoline prices for our members and donors. One bright spot in the campaign in 2008 was the awarding of a grant for more than \$300,000 from the U.S. Department of Education facilitated by one of our biggest champions, U.S. Congressman Charlie Dent. The grant helped us develop educational programs and purchase materials and equipment still being used today for those programs.

By 2009, it was time to build. At least partly because of the 2008 financial meltdown, we were not able to achieve our goal of raising \$3 million. So LGNC's design team and architect revamped the plans for our visitor and education center to meet the realities of our new budget. Dan wrote in his Director's message in Spring 2009:

"...As a result, the Board was faced with a decision to continue fundraising until we reached our goal or use the resources we have been able to secure and scale back

our plans. They have (wisely, in my opinion) chosen the latter. It is time to build!

"...This scaling back is being accomplished by using every space for more than one function. This multipurpose use will allow us to do everything we wanted to do, but with less space and less cost....We will also supplement our funding with volunteers to complete certain aspects of the project."

Another big change in the plans by architect Michael Jonn was the repositioning of a new stairwell to accommodate both the existing Osprey House and the addition that would be our new visitor and education building. Our phased approach allowed us to get started with the building process and continue successive stages of the building project as pledged donations arrived.

Groundbreaking for the visitor and education center was an occasion for another celebration in late July 2009. Speakers and attendees included our contractors, local and state elected officials and representatives of PA DCNR, as well as foundation and business donors. Excavation began the next day and, by December, the first stage of construction was completed – the foundation and shell of the building. This allowed the second stage to continue throughout the winter, as we had a weatherproof building with doors, windows, roof, and exterior siding completed.

Meanwhile, in 2009, the LGNC trail system was completed with the help of the Allentown Hiking Club. We also launched a re-designed website that was created by Dave Husic, and the education program continued to grow. LGNC hosted nine teacher workshops throughout the year, led with the help of Diane and Corey Husic. Our research partnerships were flourishing, and our grassland enhancement project was ongoing, with the planting of 1,350 perennial plugs inside and outside deer exclosures. Once again, it is easy to see how vital the role of volunteers has been at LGNC, as all of these things were accomplished by volunteers.

One more event in 2009 was very important to LGNC. In August, the U.S. Department of Justice announced that an agreement had been reached in the Natural Resource Damage (NRD) Assessment for the Superfund site, with CBS Operations (formerly Viacom) agreeing to pay



*Finishing the Trail System
2009*

a settlement of \$21 million for natural resource projects in the area. Included in that settlement was an agreement that CBS would forgive the mortgage they had on LGNC property. In 2003, Viacom agreed to give us \$332,500 to help us purchase the land that became our Refuge. As described in the Summer 2009 *Activist*,

"...CBS representative Jeff Groy requested that it officially be structured as a mortgage that could become part of the NRD settlement. We agreed, and now CBS has made good on a promise. LGNC never paid a penny of interest or principal on the loan.

"LGNC Director Dan Kunkle said, 'Thanks to CBS for the generous donation that was critical in creating the nature center. Without that donation, LGNC would not exist today. The mortgage was real, but we trusted Jeff and that CBS would make good on their promise and they have.'"

Having that mortgage off the books was a relief, and it showed that our trust in a handshake with a representative of a big company was well placed. CBS has been a very responsible, and financially responsible, party at the Palmerton Superfund site.

Work continued in 2010 on our building that includes many "green" features. All local

Looking Back: Our Green Building

The Osprey House, LGNC's headquarters and visitor center, was designed with the environment in mind. Although the original structure dates to the 19th century, the building was fully renovated during its expansion in 2010. Notable green features include:

- ✦ A 65-panel, 23.4 kW solar system
- ✦ Geothermal heat pump HVAC
- ✦ High efficiency lighting
- ✦ Insulation
- State-of-the-art stream discharge sewage treatment system
- ✦ Bird-safe window features, including CollidEscape decals and Acopian Bird Savers
- ✦ Green construction materials, including local slate, low/no VOC paints, and siding, insulation, carpeting, and decking composed of recycled materials

Surrounding the Osprey House, LGNC's landscaping includes **over 200 species of native plants** selected to support wildlife.



Solar Panel Installation
2018

contractors were engaged for the electrical, plumbing, HVAC, and carpentry work. The super-efficient design of the building makes it easy to heat and cool and has a light footprint on the planet. As Dan wrote in the *Activist* that summer, *“Minimizing our long-term expenses and our impact on the planet were high priorities throughout the project.”*

On Earth Day in 2009, 32 volunteers planted perennials between the boulders in our living wall. Our friends and partners at Edge of the Woods native plant nursery also planted the new gardens on the east and north sides of the new building, complementing the original habitat gardens that had been planted and nurtured by our Garden Group volunteers.

By July 2010, the offices, main floor, and downstairs library and lab were complete, and we held a ceremony to dedicate the “new” Osprey House. Bob Hoopes, our scribe, once again documented the event in the *Autumn Wildlife Activist*.

“On Friday, July 16, the mercury soared to 90° and about 130 people crowded into the Great Hall and the adjacent lobby area. The geothermal heat pump and the super-insulated walls were tested and easily kept the temperature inside at a cool 74° as we celebrated the opening of our new Visitor and Education Center.”

As master of ceremonies, Bob spoke of the building itself, particularly the “green” construction, how the building would be used, and how it helps us accomplish our mission. *“Ten years ago, we were in a rented storefront in Slatington planning to build an environmental education center someday, but had not yet turned our attention to Lehigh Gap. Ten years later, we come together today to celebrate the opening of this beautiful Visitor and Education Center. Ten years from now, we want to be a thriving community resource that has made a difference in the region.”*

As you can see, we were always thinking about and planning for the future. Bob then introduced a host of people who had helped make our dreams come true. Among those who spoke were Malcolm Gross from the Trexler Trust, Dennis DeMara and Secretary John Quigley from DCNR, Congressman Charlie Dent and State Representative Julie Harhart, and Elissa Garafalo, representing the D&L National Heritage Corridor. Dan Kunkle finished up by recognizing our many partners and donors

and congratulated our Board of Directors for steadfastly supporting all of these dreams, saying, *“This Board is the best. How many Boards have ever supported purchasing a Superfund site and turning it into an environmental education center? Probably one!”* As you will see, it was the only one.

A big new opportunity with the Osprey House was to engage with visitors coming to our Refuge. Now that we had a lobby and a desk for a volunteer to staff, we began the Information Specialist group, led by Jane Borbe and Anne Zagarella. These volunteers staff the desk during the day, greeting visitors, providing them with information, and answering the phone, among other duties. The info desk volunteers provide a vital service to LGNC, keeping the Osprey House open on weekdays when staff is out doing programs or away at meetings, and on weekends, as well.

The National Audubon/Toyota *TogetherGreen* program selected its second fellow from our Lehigh Gap community. This time, it was Board member Diane Husic. In addition, her son Corey was selected as one of 30 teens from around the world for The Climate Project’s Inconvenient Youth program. These awards exemplify the kinds of individuals we had attracted to our community at LGNC.

In August 2010, the 50th annual Bake Oven Knob Autumn Hawk Count began. Don Heintzelman founded the count in 1961, and the Wildlife Information Center continued it after his

departure in 1998. Today, Lehigh Gap Nature Center volunteers and interns continue the count, one of the longest running hawk migration monitoring projects in the world.

By 2011, work on part two of the Ecological Assessment was completed and published. That study was led by Diane Husic. The project was funded by PA DCNR’s Wild Resources Conservation Program with lots of support from academic partner institutions, interns, and volunteers, including several of our Naturalist Club members. From the Spring 2011 *Activist*:

“In this second assessment, the following studies and inventories were performed, greatly enhancing our understanding of the biota, physical conditions, and ecological interactions of the refuge:

- *Inventories of mammals, birds, crawling and aquatic insects, and soil microorganisms*
- *Ecological studies of succession, metal uptake, total cover and the food web of the ecological restoration area, and habitat changes and disturbances throughout the refuge*
- *Studies of the physical conditions of the refuge including metal levels in the soil and groundwater, and microclimate monitoring of various points of the refuge.”*

Dr. Husic noted that this assessment *“will serve us well in the future to inform management decisions and set parameters for future research.”* Kunkle noted that *“Aldo Leopold wrote, ‘To keep every cog and wheel is the first rule of intelligent tinkering.’ ...This assessment will help us be intelligent tinkers.”*



In 2009-12, the original Osprey House, a 19th-century farmhouse, was expanded to include a new lab, library, information desk, sales shop, offices, bathrooms, and meeting spaces.



Habitat Gardens Take Root
2010

One of the first ways we put the assessment to work came in March 2011, when we convened a group of partner scientists and agency representatives to determine the “Desired Future Conditions” (DFC) of the refuge. This DFC meeting resulted in the following conclusions about our management:

- *Letting nature take its course is not an option because of invasive species.*
- *Controlling invasives and letting nature take its course is not an option because deer browsing will prevent the return of a diverse, healthy forest, and it is possible that succession could halt with only early successional species, mainly gray birches.*
- *Possible targets of management could be diverse grassland or savanna ecosystems or diverse hardwood forest.*

The group agreed that having at least some grassland/savanna is desirable, and that would likely require management using prescribed fire. Healthy, diverse hardwood forest would also be desirable in some areas, and that would require planting and protecting later successional species such as oaks. Because of the changing climate, ecological resilience should also be a target as we direct the trajectory of succession.

Having our visitor and education center provided opportunities for a variety of new programs that needed an indoor space in winter or at night. At a meeting of the new Information Specialist group in December 2010, volunteer Nancy Taras suggested we might want to start a book club to read and discuss nature and environment related books. Dan commented that it was a great idea and asked her if she would be willing to lead it. She was, and the Cabin Fever Book Club began. The club started meeting in January 2011, the group thrived, and it continues to meet in the winter months today, with Nancy still leading the group. Be careful if you make a suggestion around here – you might end up in charge of something!

In 2011, finishing touches were made on the ecology lab on the ground floor of the Osprey House, exhibits in the Great Hall and lobby were completed, and our range of activities blossomed. The new lab and indoor “facilities” (translation: restrooms) meant that teachers felt more comfortable bringing their classes to LGNC for field trips. We started recruiting retired teachers to help with our programs, and suddenly we had as many as four classes of elementary students visiting at the same time, rotating through indoor and outdoor stations. The lessons taught at these stations were designed with the teachers, and the number of students served jumped to over 2,000 that year.

Aiding our field trips and education programs, the D&L Trail was completed through the Lehigh Gap and extended beyond our western boundary to Bowmanstown. Instead of railroad ballast, we now had a packed, crushed limestone trail that made walking much easier. This improvement also increased recreational visitation to the Refuge, and many bicyclers and walkers began using the trail.

We were able to host meetings of various kinds in our new building and assume some leadership in them as a result. One example was the Kittatinny Coalition, an alliance of conservation groups working to protect the Kittatinny Ridge throughout Pennsylvania. We began hosting the meetings of the Coalition in the Great Hall and became instrumental in the achievements of the group for the next few years. We also hosted teacher workshops, public

educational programs, such as native plant workshops, and, of course, our festivals. By summer, we had created a caretaker apartment on the ground floor of the old Osprey House, and our first on-site caretakers, Liz Stauffer and Nick Malcolm, moved in. We were able to trade the living space for work as the part-time caretakers of the building and grounds.

The year 2012 began with a new five-year strategic plan, *Renewing our Vision*. When we began the planning process, we looked back at our Master Site Plan from 2005 and realized we had accomplished nearly everything we had set out to do. As stated in the preface,

“The previous plan was about building – building programs, building our conservation successes, and building the facilities and infrastructure needed to support our work. This plan is about moving toward sustainability – sustainability of programming in education and research, sustainability of our conservation work, and financial sustainability of the organization in general.

“Lehigh Gap Nature Center is unique. It is the only environmental education center and outdoor recreation area in the country that was developed from a Superfund toxic waste site. Transforming the

Kittatinny Ridge in the area of Lehigh Gap from a barren wasteland to valuable habitat for wildlife and a park for people to enjoy nature and outdoor activities has been our signature achievement and we have received state and national recognition for this work. As the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency seeks to move the Superfund program away from merely stabilizing sites and excluding the public to economic and ecological re-use of these sites, Lehigh Gap Nature Center stands out as a shining example and model of that ecological re-use potential.”

There was also a new emphasis in this plan on engaging more diverse audiences and being more inclusive.

Work continued on the building as we remodeled the old Osprey House and added a conference room. We lacked enough funding for all the finish work, so volunteer members came in and helped with things like painting the drywall. By July, we had a new classroom space, an intern apartment, a conference room, and several much-needed storage rooms, along with the caretaker apartment in the basement. Recycling the old building, including adding insulation to the walls, was another aspect of our “green building” design.



By 2012, the Refuge and new Osprey House visitor center had become a destination for outdoor recreation and environmental education. Only a decade earlier, the site was barren and lifeless.

New programs and events continued to spring into existence, with our new building additions making them possible. Our first Speaker Series event took place in January 2012. The series, which continues today, was another volunteer-led program, with Linda Frederick, Anita Collins, and Ed Newcomb putting Linda's idea into practice. Another program, called the E-7 Club, began that winter. This was a club of clubs – high school environmental club representatives that came together at LGNC. Among the members of this club was Chad Schwartz, who is now the Executive Director of LGNC!

In April, we hosted the first Kittatinny Ridge Ecological and Conservation Science Summit – a gathering of more than 60 conservation professionals who shared information and planned new work to help protect the Kittatinny Ridge.

Another program was born in 2012 that eventually became known as the Color of Nature Leadership Program. Diane and Corey Husic and Dan Kunkle attended the first ever Focus on Diversity conference in Philadelphia in 2011. We were all asked at the end of the day to write down an idea of how we would engage more diverse audiences in birding, and ultimately in

conservation. Dan's idea became the Color of Nature program, in which LGNC would train representatives from the new communities we wish to reach to lead programs for other members of their own communities. Thanks to funding from a variety of sources, including Linny and Beall Fowler, this program continues, as well.

The members of the Naturalist Club, helping Anita Collins with her native bee project, collected a bee that Anita identified as *Lithurgis crysurus*, an invasive wood boring bee from the Mediterranean region. A year later, volunteer Joann Kersmar brought in a bee she had trapped at our wood pile, and Corey Husic recognized it as *Lithurgis*. We collected some logs with nest holes and took them back to the Nature Center. Later in the year, Dr. Jerry Rozen from the American Museum of Natural History in New York City came to visit, and Anita, Naturalist Club member Clare Kubik, and Dan helped him dissect logs to find nest chambers and larvae to study. Who knew our ecology lab would host a bee nesting expert and that we would be dissecting Joann's logs with a chisel, hammer, and Clare's hatchet? Dr. Rozen went on to find two very rare native bees in our area when he returned to find more *Lithurgis* larvae for his research.



Looking Back: Awards & Recognition



- ✦ 2004 PA Association of Environmental Professionals **Karl Mason Award** to Dan Kunkle
- ✦ 2004 Wildlands Conservancy Friend of the **Lehigh River Award** to LGNC
- ✦ 2005 **Resolution** from Lehigh County Commissioners honoring Dan Kunkle for commitment to conservation and protection of the Kittatinny Ridge
- ✦ 2006 U.S. Department of Interior **Cooperative Conservation Partnership Award** to D&L National Heritage Corridor and LGNC
- ✦ 2006 **Certificate of Special Recognition** to LGNC and Dan Kunkle from U.S. Congressman Charlie Dent, along with **Citations** from Keith McCall and Julie Harhart of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives
- ✦ 2007 PA Society for Ornithology **Conservation Award** to LGNC
- ✦ 2007 Northeast PA Environmental Partners **Partnership Award** to Dan Kunkle and LGNC
- ✦ 2009 D&L National Heritage Corridor **Stewardship Award** to LGNC
- ✦ 2009 NE PA Environmental Partners **Emerging Environmental Leader Award** to Corey Husic
- ✦ 2010 Carbon County **Citizen of the Year Award** to Dan Kunkle
- ✦ 2013 LV Green Builders Council **Sustainability Award** to LGNC
- ✦ 2013 Delaware Valley Ornithological Club **Rosalie Edge Award** to Dan Kunkle
- ✦ 2014 U.S. EPA **Inaugural Excellence in Site Reuse Award** to LGNC
- ✦ 2015 Appalachian Trail Conservancy Mid-Atlantic Region **Partner of the Year Award** to LGNC
- ✦ 2016 Muhlenberg College **Honorary Ph.D.** to Dan Kunkle for work at LGNC
- ✦ 2018 D&L National Heritage Corridor **Founder's Day Genius Award** to Dan Kunkle
- ✦ 2018 Master Watershed Steward Program **Partner of the Year Award** to Dan Kunkle
- ✦ 2018 **Lehigh Valley Planning Commission Award** to LGNC in recognition of the Color of Nature program
- ✦ 2022 Pennsylvania Solar Center **Lodestar Award** in recognition of LGNC's commitment to solar
- ✦ 2022 Lehigh Valley Planning Commission **FutureLV Hero Award** to LGNC and Color of Nature leaders Donna Hanna and Sherlyn Martinez



Part III: The Next Decade – 2013-Present



In May 2013, we celebrated our tenth anniversary of opening the Refuge to the public. The year would prove to be the busiest yet. In Dan Kunkle's Executive Director's message in the Summer 2013 edition of *Wildlife Activist* he wrote:

"As I was reading a book by the great naturalist George Schaller recently, I came across a passage in which he noted, 'Conservation is a journey, not a destination.'...it occurred to me that being successful in conservation involves enjoying that journey, even the tough traveling, and taking time to celebrate and to renew your spirit along the way."

It was time to celebrate our anniversary and, even more importantly, time to thank our members and volunteers and celebrate the community that had developed at LGNC.

Just before the anniversary celebration in May, we conducted our first prescribed fire on the Refuge as we tried to implement the plan for managing part of the Refuge as a grassland. The ten-acre plot was successfully burned, the smoke was monitored, and the impact on the vegetation

was studied for the next year. The fire proved very successful at removing the birch trees and most of the invasive species that were encroaching on the grassland, and the studies required by EPA proved that the smoke drift did not carry any metals off the Refuge. We planned for more fires, but prescribed burning proved difficult to pull off and rather expensive.

Bob Hoopes once again rose to the occasion of our anniversary and wrote a piece about why his thirteen years of volunteering for Wildlife Information Center/Lehigh Gap Nature Center mattered. He shared:

"One day in autumn 2000, Dan Kunkle asked me to join the Lehigh Gap Board of Directors. It was the Wildlife Information Center back then, without 750 acres, a new environmental education center, great community membership, or a burgeoning membership base. My acceptance followed by 13 years of volunteering was the result of a good decision by Dan and the beginning of a wonderful story for me. It's a story about helping a unique individual, who surrounded himself with a unique group of people, fulfill a dream and make a

difference in the lives of many people, young and old. My heart remembers that day and I smile every time I visit the Center to see what has become of Dan's dream.

"...From our humble beginnings, the Center has grown into a dynamic community resource supported directly through the countless hours and dedication of our many volunteers. They give their time, their skills, and their camaraderie to the Center creating a special resource for the community."

Diane Husic also contributed to the tenth anniversary issue with a summation of the decade of research at Lehigh Gap Wildlife Refuge, writing,

"...In fall 2002, Bob Hoopes wrote an article for the Wildlife Activist entitled 'A Dream Coming True.' In this piece he wrote about the purchase of land and the vision for what would happen at this site. Interestingly, he referred to the acquisition of the land as a dream come true, even though the organization had just purchased a barren, contaminated piece of land – a moonscape devoid of life...And so, with this bold statement, board members and friends of LGNC set about performing what seemed to be an impossible task – reclaiming the land. 'We will develop a restoration plan that works with natural processes to reclaim the land more rapidly than it would be reclaimed naturally.'

"How prophetic. Ten years later we have seen the miracle of recovery, the reestablishment of a functioning ecosystem – a thriving grassland – that is home to almost two thousand species of insects, birds, mammals, and plants."

She goes on to document the many research projects and monitoring of the Refuge carried out by contractors for Viacom/CBS or LGNC, undergraduate and graduate college students and faculty, Naturalist Club members, and various other volunteers. She ends with,

"...This was all predicted by Bob Hoopes and others over a decade ago when they not only had the vision to purchase the property and believed it could be restored, but also become such an important center for people to gather, learn, do research, and celebrate the resilience of nature."

All this was in the Summer 2013 edition of the *Activist*, along with updates on the many activities and progress on new programs like Color of Nature and the E-7 Club. Another

new project was also announced: The LGNC Rare Plant Garden Network. The Network was a continuation of the Rare and Forgotten Flora Trail project (Linda Frederick's idea) and Liz Stauffer's vision for a living roof on the old spring house building next to the Osprey House. Twenty-six new gardens were planted by members and organizations in the area utilizing all native plants, including some that had become rare or extinct in Pennsylvania.

That issue of the *Activist* also celebrated the preservation of the tract of land on the Kittatinny that had been purchased for the construction of the Alpine Rose Resort and racetrack. A local group in Eldred Township fought the project for 12 years with support from the Appalachian Trail Conservancy and LGNC. Finally, the *Activist* documented the hosting of the Second Kittatinny Science Summit by LGNC.

When we built the Osprey House Visitor and Education Center, we asked the architect if we would qualify for LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) "green building" certification. He was sure we would qualify but informed us that it costs a significant amount of money to apply for the certification. We decided our money would be better spent on additional green



*First Prescribed Burn
2013*

features than on a title. In late 2013, a member of the Lehigh Valley branch of the Delaware Valley Green Builder's Council contacted us about the green features of the building and nominated us for the Council's "Sustainability Award." To our delight, we were selected for the award – from the same organization to which we would have to apply for LEED certification.

Another project that was underway by autumn 2013 was our new Kittatinny Arboretum and Trailhead. We had purchased the 1.6-acre parcel the previous year below market value from member Doug Gause, and Board member Ron Kline suggested that we create an arboretum of native trees and shrubs on the property. By September 2014, we had completed the project and held a dedication ceremony for the new arboretum and trailhead at the western boundary of our property.

In the Winter 2013/14 *Activist*, Dan wrote about our second decade and celebrated the volunteers once more and especially thanked the volunteer leaders – folks who were leading a team of volunteers, once again showing our culture of putting our faith in highly qualified volunteers at the Refuge. Later in the issue, we reported on the first Nature in Art Show at the Osprey House, originated and led by Anita

Collins – you guessed it, a volunteer! That was soon followed the next March by our first Nature in Photographs show.

In autumn 2013, Bernie Story, Executive Director of the Lehigh Valley Community Foundation, came to see Dan and asked this question: If we were to give you \$20,000 a year for five years for a collaborative environmental program in the Lehigh Valley, what would it be? His answer was that we would establish a native landscaping project with our partners. In December, Mr. Story called to tell us we received the Collaborative Conservation Grant, and work started in 2014 on a new program. Originally called the Conservation Landscaping program, we gathered academic and conservation partners into a coalition to implement the project.

Soon, coalition member Kate Brandes asked Dan if she could lead the program, sharing that she could secure additional funding for her own salary. Kate took over what became known as the Landscaping for Communities and Wildlife program, which led to the planting of more than three dozen demonstration habitat gardens in public places throughout the Lehigh Valley. Five years later, LGNC published Kate's book, *Native Plants for the Small Yard*, which has become a bible of sorts for native plant garden design throughout the U.S.

In April 2014, one special Speaker Series event was a "Superfund Panel" – four speakers who helped our members understand LGNC's involvement over the years in the remediation of the Palmerton Superfund site. Charlie Root (U.S. EPA) and Jim Kunkle (PA Department of Environmental Protection) provided background on the history of the site and an overview of the regulatory process. Jeff Groy (CBS Operations – yes, the television network CBS) explained CBS's involvement because of their corporate relationship to Gulf and Western, former owner of the Zinc Company. Jen Lansing (ecologist for Arcadis and now Cardinal Directions, contractor for CBS) explained her role in implementing and monitoring the remediation effort.

Following the event, Kunkle asked Root if he had any comments to share with our members. He wrote,

"To be afforded the opportunity to speak to an interested group of citizens regarding the Palmerton Zinc Superfund Site inside the great room of the



Kittatinny Arboretum
2014

Lehigh Gap Nature Center, a facility dedicated to environmental education and conservation located on that very Superfund site, is truly special and one of the most rewarding moments of my career with EPA. The Lehigh Gap Nature Center is a unique, one-of-a-kind resource to the local community among Superfund sites in the nation. The Nature Center's contributions to not only environmental education and conservation, but also toward scientific understanding of the re-vegetation project and the physical implementation of the clean-up including operation and maintenance of the Superfund site are unparalleled. It was a pleasure to be part of the Speaker Series panel. Thank you for all the help over the years."

Little did Dan know that, as we were hosting this program, Root was nominating us for our second national award. In 2014, U.S. EPA announced its inaugural Excellence in Site Reuse Award winners in each of their regions, and, in September, LGNC received the first ever such award for Region III. EPA Region III Administrator Shawn Garvin travelled to LGNC that September to present us with the award, appropriately made of recycled wine bottle glass.

Other accomplishments in 2014 included the Kittatinny Ridge Conservation Research Project, in which we documented the ecology and songbirds of the eastern PA section of the Ridge, and the establishment of the Conservation Leadership Academy for Allentown students.

Thanks to the Hommer Foundation, we have a beautiful library for our extensive collection of conservation literature and archives. While the books and periodicals were catalogued and accessible, our archival materials were not. Enter another volunteer, Barb Wiemann, who retired from her librarian career in 2014. She took on the archives project to organize and catalogue the materials, making them usable. She has continued working on other aspects of our library to this day, keeping it in tiptop condition and order.

After five very busy years of building the new Osprey House Visitor and Education Center, remodeling and integrating the old Osprey House into the new building, and a rapid expansion of programs, 2015 was a relatively quiet year as far as new programs are concerned. All our existing programs were continued and/or expanded with an emphasis on making sure everything we did was done well.

Looking Back: In Memoriam

We remember here all those members and supporters we have lost along the way. They have all been important to us. We especially remember here those people who had very significant roles in the leadership and/or development of LGNC.

- ✦ **George Ashman** – volunteer and donor
- ✦ **Wes & Don Beltz** – Hawk Count volunteers
- ✦ **Carl Griffin** – Trail Team volunteer
- ✦ **Loretta Fair** – education program developer and Education Team volunteer
- ✦ **Linny Fowler** – major donor for Visitor and Education Center campaign
- ✦ **Elissa Garafalo** – Executive Director of D&L, partner in 2006 Community Conservation Partnership award, and leader of LGNC's 2012 strategic planning process
- ✦ **Bertie Griffith** – first Financial Secretary
- ✦ **Janet Goloub** – Allentown Hiking Club president who first approached LGNC to partner on trails
- ✦ **Mike Gusick** – volunteer and storyteller
- ✦ **Donald Heintzelman** – co-founder of Wildlife Information Center and founder of the Bake Oven Knob Hawk Count
- ✦ **Michal Kubik** – LGNC Board President during the establishment of LGNC and expansion of the Osprey House; member of the visitor and education center design team
- ✦ **Reuben Kunkle** – Financial Secretary and chief hot dog griller
- ✦ **Frank Kuserk** – Moravian College biologist and LGNC researcher
- ✦ **Nelson Markley** – longtime advisor to the Executive Director; Board member and Finance Committee Chair who revised our endowment fund procedures
- ✦ **Ken Medd** – LGNC Board President
- ✦ **Jason Moore** – Hawk Count volunteer
- ✦ **Bill Mineo** – major advisor, Board member, and originator of warm-season grass plan for restoring the Refuge
- ✦ **Ilse Stoll** – pioneering native plant champion
- ✦ **Steve Sushinski** – Hawk Count volunteer
- ✦ **Fritz Williams** – program leader, musician at events, and advisor to the Executive Director
- ✦ **Grant White** – LGNC Board member and originator of the LGNC idea

The one program that continued to expand was our education program. In 2015, we reached nearly 5,000 students, doubling the number we reached just three years before. With one staff person, all this expansion could be attributed to volunteers once again. Ten retired teachers assisted Dan in carrying out these programs. Those ten people had a collective total of almost 300 years of experience in teaching students in public schools. Many of them, including Kathie Romano, Barb Egerton, Lee Kunkle, Anne Zagarella, Donna Gasser, and Nancy Taras, were not only stalwarts in the education program, but they also became involved in many other aspects of LGNC, as well.

Starting the previous year, we had ventured into doing programs in urban schools in the Lehigh Valley, especially in Allentown. This was part of our emphasis on reaching more diverse audiences with our conservation message and was supported by several of the foundations that provided us with grants. We targeted fourth grade, the year in which students take the PA standardized tests in science, as well as in ecology and environment. Our goal was to work with the teachers in these schools to improve test scores by providing four in-school programs on difficult conceptual topics, plus provide one field trip to LGNC. The program has been incredibly successful on all counts, as the scores have improved, creating demand from more and more teachers in Allentown who want us to come to their schools. In spite of our

incredible volunteer retired teachers, we began to realize we needed a staff person to help teach all these programs.

As Dan wrote in the Winter 2015/16 edition of *Wildlife Activist*, our education programs encompass people of all ages in both formal and informal programs (signage and exhibits):

“The premise of our education efforts lies in the fact that the planet that we live on sustains us. Everything we need to live – energy, food, clean water, and air – comes from the earth. We must take care of the earth so it can take care of us. Most young people today (and many older ones as well) are disconnected from these life-sustaining systems and may not recognize their importance to us all....We want to expose as many people as possible to the outdoors to help them care about the environment, and we do this by providing opportunities to connect with nature in a fun, physical, and educational way.”

The year 2016 arrived with LGNC involved in a new initiative – an alliance of 23 environmental education centers from three states (NJ, DE, and PA) throughout the Delaware River Watershed. This was an initiative of the William Penn Foundation to work to ensure adequate supplies of clean, fresh water to Philadelphia and other cities along the Delaware. Not only was LGNC selected to participate in the alliance, but we were also asked to help lead it. Our Director, Dan Kunkle was selected to be a co-



Alongside the grassland, an extensive environmental education program has grown at LGNC. Since 2003, LGNC has educated thousands of people of all ages.

lead of the professional development team (one of three teams at the time), as well as the Advisory Committee to help guide the development and then the operation of what became known as the Alliance for Watershed Education of the Delaware River (AWE). We were also asked to host a staff person for the professional development team. That person is now Lauren Foltz, who works as AWE's Network Development Coordinator and LGNC's Office Administrator. Our leadership in the Alliance continues today.

That Summer, Dan's Director's message in the *Activist* was titled "YOU are the Nature Center." He wrote:

"As the building was under construction, many people stopped by and asked, 'When is the Nature Center going to be finished?' ...I would say, 'That is our visitor and education center, not the nature center. The 750 acres is the nature center.' ...But as we discussed this, I realized that the land is not the nature center either. YOU, our members and supporters and volunteers, are the nature center!"

And as Board president Anita Collins wrote,

"If you aren't closely involved with the day-to-day running of this place [LGNC] you may not be aware of the excitement, the energy, and the fun that gets generated around here. There are so many terrific people who give of their time and talents to make Lehigh Gap Nature Center a unique place. There may be nothing quite like this place anywhere else."

Looking Back: Conferences & Presentations

LGNC has had the honor to present our work at various local, regional, national, and international conferences, including the following:

- ✦ Society for Ecological Restoration/Ecological Society of America Conference
- ✦ National Environmental Protection Agency Superfund Conference
- ✦ 5th Eastern Grass Symposium
- ✦ North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE) San Diego Conference
- ✦ NAAEE Madison Conference



*Life on the Refuge
2016*

Indeed, Anita is right. This place is unique in many ways, not the least of which is the community of people that has developed here at the Lehigh Gap. We are very lucky indeed.

In 2016, we also began a new Fit Walk program, with the idea of getting people out on the trails in nature for its health benefits. Four LGNC volunteers led the program for six weeks, and the cumulative 38 participants walked a total of 603 miles.

In September 2016, recognizing the need for more staff and finally feeling as though we could sustain the position, we advertised for a new Program Specialist position to help with the education programs. We were overwhelmed with applicants, but one stood out – Chad Schwartz. We knew Chad from the E-7 Club and from the several summers he spent with us as an intern during his years at Muhlenberg College. It was an easy decision.

It was time once again for the Board of Directors to engage in planning for the next five years. Our first decade was about *establishing* the Refuge, its programs, its infrastructure, and healing the land. The next five were about *sustainability*, and that emphasis remains. This time, because Dan's retirement as Executive Director was

Looking Back: A Grassroots Effort

We honor all our members who have supported us with membership dues and donations, and we honor all volunteers who have donated their precious time and talent in the past 20 years. LGNC would not exist without all these people. While the list is far too long to print here, we thank **each and every one of you** for the contributions you havemade to creating and sustaining LGNC. This is truly a grassroots organization that has depended on people like you. You have all made a difference!

We extend a special thanks to our five volunteer groups:

- ✂ Education Team
- ✂ Hawk Count Team
- ✂ Information Specialist Team
- ✂ Garden Group
- ✂ Trail Team

New volunteers are always welcome! Email volunteering@lgnc.org for more information.

expected within the five-year period, the plan had an emphasis on *transition* to new leadership.

With Chad Schwartz assisting with our education programs, we were able to expand opportunities. Three summer camps were held during the summer of 2017, our clubs became more active, and our programs with schools continued to increase in number, doubling once again to nearly 10,000 students served in 2017. In September, we added another staff person, Brian Birchak, to assist with education programs and take over the role of Communications Specialist. Like Chad, Brian was known to us, first as an undergraduate student researcher with Dr. Frank Kuserk from Moravian College, then as a volunteer who especially helped with watering the plants and caring for the Arboretum in its first year.

Our leadership in the Alliance for Watershed Education led to LGNC hosting a three-day professional development conference along the Lehigh River in August 2018. More than 70 AWE members paddled, biked, and walked their way

along the Lehigh River from the Falls of the Lehigh in Stoddartsville to its confluence with the Delaware at Easton.

Two more items deserve mention for 2018. Anita Collins began what we are unofficially calling “Lehigh Gap University” – teaching classes for adults, especially seniors. Anita taught the well-received “Very Basic Biology” class, though some class members questioned the “very” and even the “basic” part of the title. Little did Anita know, she was preparing her students well to understand the pandemic that had not yet started. The second item was that, thanks to Board member Marilyn Jordan’s marathon effort, we finally secured a Green Mountain Energy Sun Club grant of more than \$85,000 and installed solar panels on the roof of the Osprey House. This was the last pillar of our “green building” plan, and it finally was complete. The panels serve to set an example for the community, to educate students, to lighten our carbon footprint, and to save money on our electric bill.

The year 2019 was a time of transition for the administrative structure of LGNC. Because we had two such competent staff members with Chad and Brian, and because Dan’s 65th birthday was coming in August, Dan decided it was the perfect time for him to step down as Executive Director. While the date for his retirement was set for the end of the year, he began turning over responsibility for the operations to Chad and Brian as the year began. Dan spent time reviewing non-profit management literature with Chad and Brian, and, in the second half of the year, Bob Hoopes led the duo in professional development sessions to prepare them to take the reins of leadership.

In his Winter 2019/2020 Director’s message, “*The Story Continues...*,” Dan wrote:

“In my tenure as Director of LGNC, I have sought to cultivate a culture of inclusiveness and appreciation for everyone who has played a part in our organization. A culture in which we seek to provide a great return on our members’ and donors’ investment of time or money and in which we value quality over quantity. A culture in which we value partners and work collaboratively. A culture in which we provide quality educational programs and implement innovative solutions to the problems on our Superfund site. A culture in which there is a strong reliance on our highly motivated and qualified volunteers whom we give authority to do their work for us.”

In deciding who would be the next Executive Director, the Board decided to make Chad and Brian Co-Directors, each with specific responsibilities. As Director of Science & Education, Chad would focus on education and outreach, research, and fundraising, while Brian, the Director of Communications, would manage communications, IT, and maintenance. Both also continued leading programs as they had since they were first hired. Amidst the staffing transition, LGNC's educational impact continued to increase in 2019, with LGNC's programs directly reaching a record 12,000 students throughout the year.

Also in 2019, volunteer Bonnie Pancoast established the new volunteer position of Volunteer Liaison to oversee the coordination of volunteer groups and provide guidance to incoming volunteers.

Chad and Brian's first year as Co-Directors began normally. Lauren Foltz had just joined the LGNC staff as the new Office Administrator. Winter in-school programs were in full swing, and planning was underway for the coming spring and summer. Following the success of Anita's Very Basic Biology series, Dan Kunkle, volunteered to lead LGNC's second course for members – Ornithology/Birding 101. None of us foresaw what lay ahead in the coming months.

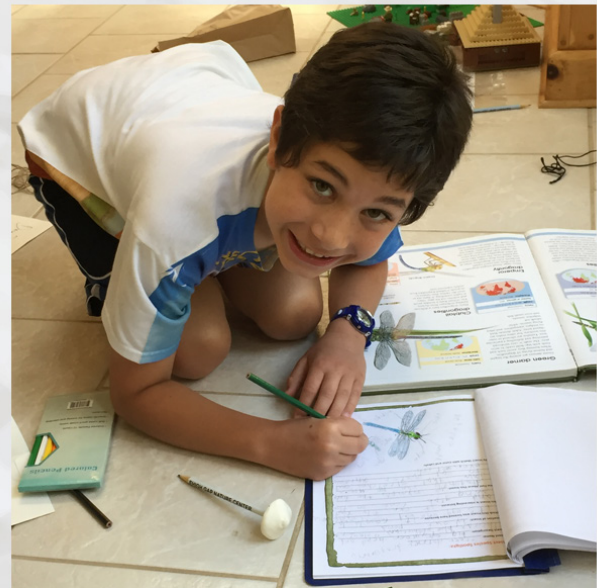
On March 15, 2020, the Osprey House unexpectedly closed its doors to the public as the COVID-19 pandemic spread nationwide. The pandemic also prompted schools to shut down and transition to fully remote teaching. As days turned to weeks and weeks turned to months, and our full calendar of in-person programs was cancelled, we knew we would be in this for the long haul. But the LGNC staff was proactive from day one, surveying teachers, LGNC members, and the public on their needs and responding with a wide assortment of virtual and remote offerings.

Brian reflected on these strange times in his Summer 2020 Director's message:

"The transition year began well, at least for the first two-and-a-half months. Then the COVID-19 pandemic came along and changed the way we did everything. We're an education facility, and an end to all in-person programming is a big change. Fortunately, we were prepared."

In that same issue of the *Activist*, Chad recalled Dan remarking that *"Nothing in your training prepared you to deal with a pandemic."*

Yet, 2020 was a year of innovation, as we developed new ways to engage students and the public. Most immediately, we launched a new "LGNC Online" video series on YouTube, which today features over 60 school standards-based science videos, virtual trail tours, native plant spotlights, and more. These videos, along with LGNC's virtual Speaker Series, Nature in Art classes, Cabin Fever Book Club gatherings, and other online programs, reached audiences near and far – including in other countries. Zoom also enabled the LGNC staff to continue meeting with our partners and engaging K-12 and college students from the safety of home. Lastly, with the help of volunteers, we offered remote adaptations of nearly all of the events that were previously scheduled for 2020. Summer camp activities were neatly organized into kits and complemented with daily Zoom gatherings. "Migration Day," another kit-based event, was held in place of Migration Fest, and 50 wreath kits were sold in place of the Holiday Open House.



Learning at Home
2020

Other highlights from the year included record trail use and Refuge visitation and the completion of the 60th Bake Oven Knob Hawk Count, which logged a record 455 Bald Eagles for the season. With support from the Trexler Trust, LGNC partnered with Wildlands Conservancy and the Allentown Parks Department to publish a strategic plan for environmental education in the City of Allentown. This plan continues to guide collaborative outreach to Allentown students today. By the end of the year, the Osprey House remained closed, but LGNC's dedicated outdoor volunteers had returned to care for the gardens and trails.

Looking back at all that was accomplished in the early days of the pandemic, Chad reflected on LGNC's story of hope in the Summer 2020 *Activist*:

"Through our restoration work, LGNC has a history of turning a seemingly hopeless situation into something positive. And just as so many before us have worked tirelessly to create a community resource from a barren mountainside, Brian and I strive to find creative new ways to serve our members and the community during the pandemic. We will always draw inspiration from LGNC's story of hope as the only nature center on a Superfund site."



Hybrid Summer Camp
2021

Early in 2021, the LGNC Board and staff began work on the next five-year strategic framework, which lays out our vision for the years 2022-26. Through our conversations, surveys, and focus group meetings, it quickly became apparent that *people* would be our focus. The new framework, titled *Entering Our Third Decade: A Bold Story of Hope for the Future*, consists of four strategic pillars with goals focused on cultivating an equitable and inclusive conservation community: Conservation/Stewardship, Education, Sustainability, and Leadership.

In his Autumn 2021 Director's message, "More than a Mountain," Brian wrote about what makes LGNC so special and how this would influence the theme of our strategic framework:

*"The questions we should be asking are why, how, and – most importantly – who is responsible for [all that LGNC is today]? The best and simplest of answers to these questions is **people**. People who cared. People who wanted to make something better. And people who wanted to give of themselves for the benefit of future generations. LGNC was founded by volunteers. People are the primary focus of LGNC's strategic plan for the next five years."*

As we developed this framework, we also began our efforts in 2021 to reconnect with people – particularly our members, volunteers, and partners whom we hadn't seen in person for so long. In April 2021, we welcomed back our first field trip. Then, after meeting with our Information Specialist volunteers, installing plexiglass and other safety modifications, and enacting a mask requirement, LGNC reopened the Osprey House to the public on June 14, 2021. Slowly but surely, hybrid and fully in-person programs returned to our calendar. September's Migration Fest drew the first big crowd to the Osprey House in 18 months.

At the same time, we continued some virtual outreach, as well. YouTube videos surpassed 10,000 views. We also introduced new opportunities for self-guided learning on the Refuge, including revised brochures and an interactive Native Sensory Garden Trail complete with sensory-friendly native plants, outdoor musical instruments, and sensory panels. This idea was first suggested by Volunteer Liaison, Bonnie Pancoast. And thanks to the efforts of a new team of Stewardship Interns who supported our Trail Team volunteers, trail maintenance was completed in record time for visitors to enjoy.

In his Spring 2021 Director's message, Chad likened the transition out of the pandemic to the cycles of renewal on the Refuge:

"With the warmth of late spring and early summer, the grassland will awaken once again and tower up to six feet above the Prairie Grass Trail by August. Throughout the growing season, this vibrant habitat will provide food, shelter, and nesting habitat to a diversity of wildlife, as well as a welcome respite to countless LGNC visitors. In the same sense, the life and energy of LGNC's in-person outreach will rebound as we move beyond the pandemic.

"Sometimes, disturbances can reset this annual cycle of regrowth. Every so often, the ecological restoration experts conduct prescribed burns on the grassland to manage the ecosystem. After the fire has charred its way across a section of the refuge, the mountain offers a momentary glimpse of its former moonscape, and it appears that all of our revegetation efforts have been lost to the flames. Yet, the grasses have adapted to thrive in such conditions, and from the nutrient-rich ashes of the prescribed burn, a more robust grassland prevails. Emerging from the pandemic, how can we – like the grasses – not only rebound, but also grow back stronger than we were before?"

The answer to this question became clear as time went on. In 2022 and 2023, LGNC has continued to enhance its programs with technology. In addition, we have built upon new partnerships that began during the pandemic. What started on Zoom has blossomed into some exciting in-person learning opportunities.

Throughout 2022, all of LGNC's former in-person programs resumed at full capacity. Another new, volunteer-led program, Sessions for Seasoned Citizens, was launched by Board member Jan Maurer. This particular program was specifically created with senior citizens in mind. Then, following a two-year hiatus, Dan Kunkle's Birding/Ornithology 101 classes returned. Two online educational resources were also launched. The LGNC website is now home to the Lehigh Valley Native Plant Directory, a one-stop source of information on native plants hosted in partnership with the Pennsylvania Master Gardeners. Secondly, Board member Al Bodzin's team at Lehigh University completed a virtual reality tour of LGNC called "The Lehigh Gap Story." Meanwhile, YouTube views reached close to 30,000 since the pandemic began.

Looking Back: Logos Through the Years



Wildlife Info Center Logo

**LEHIGH GAP
NATURE CENTER**



LGNC's Original Logo



LGNC's Current Logo



Special Anniversary Logo

To provide some other means of engaging trail and Refuge visitors, LGNC began a campaign to install an educational mural along the D&L Trail, and an observation bee hive was installed on the porch of the Osprey House in partnership with the Lehigh Valley Sierra Club. Enhancements were also made to the Arboretum through the addition of trail amenities and new native plants.

Perhaps the most significant change in 2022 came about in October. Co-Director Brian Birchak resigned from the LGNC staff after accepting a position at a partner organization, where he currently continues to support conservation in a new capacity. The LGNC Board subsequently appointed Chad Schwartz to the position of Executive Director, and the search began for a new Education & Outreach Coordinator to oversee LGNC's educational initiatives. This position was filled in early 2023 by Riley Davenport, who was formerly on the education staff at Hawk Mountain Sanctuary and Wildlands Conservancy.

The first part of 2023 has been a busy period of transition, as Riley has learned and taken on her roles in the organization. All programs are back in full swing. On the Refuge, work is underway to reseed sections of the mountain with an assortment of native wildflower, grass, and tree seeds in an effort to increase plant diversity and vegetative cover. This marks the first time in over a decade that crop dusters have been used in the restoration of the Refuge.

Looking Back: Measuring Our Impact

Below are some of the noteworthy statistics highlighting the impact LGNC's members and volunteers have had over the past two decades:

- ✦ **Acres of Refuge land preserved: 756**
- ✦ **# of native species planted: >200**
- ✦ **Miles of trail built: 13**
- ✦ **# of trail users: >250,000**
- ✦ **# of program participants: ~200,000**
- ✦ **# of agency & academic partners: >50**
- ✦ **# of individual partners: hundreds**

Now, in the spring of 2023, we anticipate the 20th anniversary of the Lehigh Gap Wildlife Refuge. As we prepare to celebrate with our members, volunteers, partners, and friends, we look back fondly at all that our little grassroots organization has done together. To all who have been a part of this unique and unlikely story, we thank you immensely.

2022





Part IV: The Future



For an organization that has accomplished so much in such little time, what comes next? LGNC's first twenty years have established a strong foundation for future success. Alongside the revitalization of a long-barren mountainside, LGNC has developed a flourishing wildlife refuge and community resource, as well as an extensive environmental education program that reaches thousands of people each year. Our next decade will focus on sustaining, enhancing, and building upon what we've achieved thus far by drawing from that same grassroots spirit that got us where we are today.

In the immediate future, we will focus on rebuilding the LGNC community as we continue to recover from the impacts of the pandemic. This includes growing, supporting, and celebrating our volunteer base, welcoming new members, and creating new opportunities for fellowship and collaboration. From a programmatic perspective, we will seek to improve access to environmental education and outdoor recreation for audiences who we have not previously engaged, in addition to those who face barriers to accessing LGNC and its services. Furthermore, we will work toward reestablishing research partnerships with colleges and universities to support student learning and inform Refuge management.

In the next decade we will also work intentionally and innovatively to tell the story of "The Miracle of Lehigh Gap." Today, most students who visit the Refuge have never known a barren mountain. Although this is a testament to the success of LGNC's restoration efforts, it also shows how quickly our story of hope could be forgotten if it isn't passed along.

As Diane Husic noted in her Autumn 2021 President's message, *"We must never lose sight of the miraculous restoration of habitat and an ecosystem on the once barren landscape. Stories of hope like the one from the Lehigh Gap are critically important for people to hear in these uncertain and rapidly changing times."* Thus, we are continually pursuing creative avenues to share our good news. LGNC's success despite seemingly insurmountable odds has the power to motivate others to take action in a world of environmental challenges.

All of our decisions in the coming years will be rooted in sustainability and ensuring quality over quantity. Most importantly, we will maintain a culture that values the talents and contributions of our members and volunteers — the lifeblood of our organization. Together, we will write the next chapter of LGNC's story and celebrate many more future successes. 🌲



2002



Feb – Meeting with Bill Mineo (D&L Trail) to discuss the feasibility of the Lehigh Gap Restoration Project and buying a mountain; **Jun** – Dan Kunkle resigns as Board President and is appointed Executive Director; **Sep** – Agreements of sale completed on three properties totaling 756 acres; LGNC testifies against Alpine Rose Resort/Race Track on the Kittatinny Ridge; **Nov** – Technical meetings conducted by EPA, warm-season grass method proposed and approved; **Dec** – Osprey House purchase completed, Wildlife Information Center moves office to Lehigh Gap



2003



Continued programs including Winter Bird Survey, Feeder Watch, Migration Fest, and Bake Oven Knob Hawk Count; **Apr/May** – Superfund restoration test plots planted with warm season grasses; **May** – *Lehigh Gap Wildlife Refuge opens to the public*; Last of three properties for 756-acre Refuge purchased; **Jun** – First summer camp held at the new Refuge; first inventories of Refuge species published in *Wildlife Activist*; **Fall** – Grasses covering all test plots; First of many college research interns hosted

Jan – First annual LGNC calendar of events published; **Apr** – Master site planning begins for Refuge, planning committee forms; Donald Heintzelman Conservation Library dedicated; Prairie Warbler Trail completed; **Summer** – Beginnings of the trail system developed in partnership with Allentown Hiking Club; **Sep** – First field trips with K-12 schools and colleges take place; **Dec** – First Holiday Open House event held

2004



Jan – Master Site Plan for Lehigh Gap Refuge is published (led by Bill Mineo); **May** – Pavilion completed by Rotary Club of Slatington; Eric Wolfgang designs first website; **Jun** – Habitat Gardens Project led by Linda Frederick established on Osprey House grounds; **Oct** – All debt (over \$900,000) for land and Osprey House purchases are retired except mortgage with Viacom (CBS); Michal Jonn, Architect, is engaged to design visitor and education center; LGNC joins Lehigh Valley Greenways Conservation Landscape Initiative, remains part of steering committee today

2005



Jan – Wildlife Information Center, Inc. registers with PA Bureau of Charities to do business as “Lehigh Gap Nature Center”; Design team formed to plan visitor and education center with architect; **Mar** – Corey Husic’s long-term bird survey project begins; **Mar-May** – Full-scale planting of entire barren area of Refuge is completed using land-based (tractors and spreaders) and aerial (crop-duster) application methods; Charcoal Trail is completed; **Sep** - Lehigh Gap Naturalist Club is founded

2006



Jan – First Lehigh Gap Research Roundtable with academic and agency partners is hosted by Diane Husic at Moravian College; **Apr** – Achieve Vision capital campaign begins and Secor Associates engaged to assist; **Jul** – Ecological Assessment Part I is published; **Oct** – Achieve the Vision campaign goes public; Chestnut Oak Trail is completed

2007





2008



Jan-Dec – Achieve the Vision Campaign ongoing, meetings with potential funders; **Summer** – D&L Trail completed through Gap and access road is reconstructed next to Trail; **Nov** – Alvin H. Butz engaged to manage construction of visitor and education center; plans for visitor and education center revised and finalized



2009



May – Stream discharge sewage system installed for new building and original Osprey House; **Jul** – Groundbreaking ceremony held for new visitor and education center; Dave Husic launches re-designed website; **Aug** – Palmerton NRD Settlement results in forgiveness of Viacom (CBS) mortgage on Osprey House and property; **Dec** – Construction of visitor and education center ongoing with shell (phase 1) completed in December



2010



Jan-Jul - Construction of visitor and education center ongoing, living wall and gardens constructed and planted; **Jul** – Grand opening of main floor and library of new Osprey House; Leaf Tile Display 1 is installed on Osprey House porch; Information Specialists begin staffing desk in main lobby; indoor exhibits created; **Autumn** – Retired teachers recruited to help with education programs; **Dec** – Ecological Assessment Part II is published



2011



Jan – First meeting of the Cabin Fever Book Club; **Mar** – Science group convened to discuss “desired future conditions” of the Refuge habitats; **Apr** – Ecology lab is completed and being used by students; Caretaker apartment and conference room completed and open for use; **Jun** – First caretakers move in and begin duties; Grassland enhanced with perennials and deer enclosure project; **Jul** – Educational field trips served 5,000 students in past 12 months since education center opened, more than doubling the previous 12-month total; **Summer** – Osprey House pond is rebuilt; **Oct** – First 10K trail run held

Jan – Speaker Series is launched; **Mar** – 2012-16 Strategic Plan published; First Kittatinny Science Summit hosted by LGNC for Kittatinny Coalition; **Jun** – remodeling of old Osprey House, including intern quarters, completed by volunteers; Invasive wood-boring bee discovered at Lehigh Gap by Naturalist Club and Anita Collins; **Sep** – Rare and Forgotten Flora Trail is established; Color of Nature program is established; **Dec** – 1.6-acre plot of land acquired for trailhead and arboretum at west end of Refuge

2012



Apr – Test prescribed fire conducted on 10-acre section of grassland restoration area; **May** – Leaf Tile display 2 is installed on Osprey House porch; 10th anniversary celebration and volunteer recognition event held; First Quilt Raffle held; Rare Plant Garden Network program created; Second Kittatinny Science Summit hosted; **Jun** – Alpine Rose Tract preserved on Kittatinny Ridge with help from LGNC; **Aug** – First Nature in Art Show held; **Dec** – Received Collaborative Conservation grant from LV Community Foundation for five-year Landscaping for Communities and Wildlife project

2013



Mar – First Nature in Photographs Show held; **Spring/Summer** – Kittatinny Ridge conservation research project takes place; **Aug** – First Conservation Leadership Academy held; **Sep** – Kittatinny Arboretum and Trailhead dedicated; **Oct** – Third Kittatinny Science and Research Summit takes place; Barb Wiemann begins organizing and cataloguing LGNC's Archives

2014



Apr – LGNC first testifies in FERC hearing about proposed PennEast Pipeline; **May** – Chair Rail Leaf Tile Project installed in Great Hall; **Oct** – Presented at North American Association for Environmental Education conference about Color of Nature program

2015





2016



May – LGNC’s Fit Walk program begins; **Jun** – First Pollinator Day event held; **Jul** – Second “Desired Future Conditions” summit convened; **Aug** – LGNC invited to join William Penn Foundation’s Alliance for Watershed Education collaborative (AWE); Chad Schwartz hired as first Program Specialist; **Oct** – 60 acres on east side of Lehigh Gap donated to LGNC



2017



Jan – New five-year Strategic Plan adopted, emphasizes sustainability and transition; **Jul** – Inaugural Watershed Camp held; **Sep** – Program & Communications Specialist, Brian Birchak, hired; LGNC publishes *Native Plants for the Small Yard* by Kate Brandes, a product of the five-year Landscaping for Communities and Wildlife program



2018



Jul – LGNC hosts its first Watershed Fellow, Anais Martinez, through AWE; **Aug** – Solar panels installed on the Osprey House, completing our green building plans; LGNC hosts a three-day Lehigh River Watershed experience for AWE; **Sep** – Very Basic Biology introduced by Anita Collins; **Dec** – LGNC teaches more than 10,000 students throughout the year; education program expands with additional summer camps and expanded programming in 11 area school districts, plus colleges, universities, and pre-schools



2019



Transition year, preparing for Executive Director’s retirement and training of Co-Directors; **Mar** – Caretaker, Greg Grammes, joins the team; **Aug** – River Trail improved for use by students on field trips; **Dec** – LGNC teaches more than 12,000 students throughout the year

Jan – Founding director retires and Co-Directors Schwartz and Birchak assume leadership of LGNC; Lauren Foltz joins staff as Office Administrator; **Feb** – Ornithology/Birding classes begin; **Mar** – COVID-19 pandemic begins, shutting down schools; “LGNC Online” YouTube series launches; **Jun and Jul** – LGNC hosts two at-home summer camps complete with take-home camp kits; **Oct** – “Migration Day,” a remote, kit-based event, held in place of Migration Fest; **Nov** – 60th Bake Oven Knob Hawk Count concludes; **Dec** – 50 wreath kits distributed in lieu of the Holiday Open House; virtual Speaker Series begins



2020

Apr – Return of in-person school programs; **Jun** – Osprey House reopens; YouTube video views surpass 10,000 since March of 2020; **Jul** – LGNC hosts AWE art project; **Sep** – Migration Fest welcomes first big crowd back to the Osprey House; Stewardship Interns added to summer staff; Native Sensory Garden Trail and Native Grassland Restoration Garden installed for interactive experiences and telling our restoration story; PennEast pulls plug on proposed pipeline



2021

Jan – New five-year strategic framework adopted; Education program goes live again; Sessions for Seasoned Citizens program begins; **Apr** – LGNC hosts the Lehigh Valley Native Plant Directory on its website; **May** – LGNC mural campaign launched; Observation bee hive installed; **Summer** – Arboretum revitalization introduces new native shrubs, grasses, wildflowers, and trail enhancements to the Kittatinny Arboretum; **Sep** – Lehigh University creates a virtual reality LGNC field trip; **Oct** – Brian Birchak resigns, Board names Chad Schwartz Executive Director; **Dec** – YouTube views near 30,000 since March of 2020



2022

20th Anniversary – a year-long celebration; **Jan** – Riley Davenport hired as Education & Outreach Coordinator; **Mar-Apr** – Aerial seeding conducted on 365 acres across the Superfund site to increase plant diversity and vegetative cover; **May** – 20th Anniversary Celebration takes place



2023



LGNC News and Updates



In March 2023, aerial seeding resumed in the Lehigh Gap for the first time in over a decade. The airplanes dropped a variety of native flower, grass, and tree seeds in an effort to increase plant diversity and vegetative cover on the Blue Mountain.

New Year Begins with Staffing Changes

Along with the cooler weather, the fall season ushered in a series of notable changes behind the scenes at LGNC. In October, Brian Birchak resigned from his position as Director of Communications after accepting a position with a partner conservation organization. Following Brian's departure, Chad Schwartz, who had served as Director of Science & Education, was appointed to the role of Executive Director. Finally, we welcomed Riley Davenport as our new Education & Outreach Coordinator this past January. Lauren Foltz continues in her roles as LGNC's Office Administrator and Network Development Coordinator for the Alliance for Watershed Education. Despite all this change, the LGNC staff remains as dedicated as ever to supporting our members, volunteers, and constituents.

Brian's Departure

Brian Birchak joined the LGNC staff during the summer of 2017 as our Program & Communications Specialist. Brian was no stranger to LGNC. Growing up in Palmerton, he spent much time outdoors in the Gap and experienced the mountain's transformation as it unfolded right in his own backyard. In the years leading up to his employment with LGNC, Brian conducted research on the Refuge as a college student, volunteered on LGNC's Education Team, helped to maintain the Arboretum, and enjoyed many a peaceful hike on our trails. As Program & Communications Specialist, Brian worked with Chad Schwartz, also a Program Specialist at the time, to expand LGNC's educational initiatives and reach new audiences.

Brian and Chad continued working together in a new capacity as Co-Directors when Dan Kunkle retired from the Executive Director position at the end of 2019. Brian, the Director of Communications, oversaw communications, maintenance, and IT. Chad, the Director of Science & Education, managed education, outdoor recreation, and research initiatives, as well as fundraising. Brian and Chad led LGNC



We thank Brian Birchak for his dedication to LGNC.

through the pandemic, navigating the shift to virtual outreach and the return to normalcy. On Saturday, October 15, 2022, Brian led one final program for a college group before he moved on to a new opportunity. We thank Brian for all of his contributions to the growth and success of LGNC over the past six years, and we wish him nothing but the best going forward.

Restructuring

In late October, the LGNC Board of Directors made the decision to go forward with a single Executive Director and selected Chad to fill this position. Chad, like Brian, grew up locally and remembers when the Lehigh Gap was still barren and lifeless. He was formally introduced to LGNC through E-7, an interscholastic environmental club established by Dan Kunkle in 2011. From that point forward, he was enthralled with LGNC's story. As an undergraduate student, Chad spent two of his summers supporting various research and stewardship efforts in the Gap. He began his career at LGNC as a Program Specialist in 2016 and has been involved with education ever since. As Director, he is honored and humbled to serve the organization that he has admired since he was a student himself.

With the new Executive Director in place, the next step was to fill the remaining staffing vacancy. The Board worked closely with Chad and Lauren to consider all options. We agreed that it was time to create a new full-time position focused on one of the key pillars of our mission – education. LGNC’s educational impact has grown substantially over the past decade, peaking in the year prior to the pandemic, when we reached over 10,000 students. Sustaining our education initiatives required a dedicated staff person who would not just lead programs but also plan and manage all aspects of LGNC’s outreach to schools and the general public. Thus, the Education & Outreach Coordinator position was born.

Welcoming Riley

Three months after Brian’s last day with LGNC, the Education & Outreach Coordinator position was filled by Riley Davenport on January 19, 2023. Riley quickly learned the nuts and bolts of LGNC’s education initiatives and successfully took on all program coordination responsibilities within her first two months on the job. Chad now focuses on the administration of the organization, while Brian’s maintenance and communications duties are shared among the three staff.

Riley comes to LGNC with a strong background in environmental education and the arts. Born in Barnegat, NJ, Riley grew up exploring Barnegat Bay and Long Beach Island. At a young age, she developed an interest in wildlife and the environment that would ultimately lead her into the environmental education field. Yet, Riley’s passion for the arts first drew her to a career in art education. Riley graduated from Kutztown University with a B.S. in Art Education and immediately began work as an art teacher at a public high school. Although she enjoyed working with the students, she soon began considering other education careers outside of the classroom that would allow her to pursue her love of nature.

In 2019, Riley stepped out of the classroom into a position as a Conservation Education Trainee at Hawk Mountain Sanctuary. During the traineeship, she helped the Hawk Mountain education team prepare educational materials, used her art skills to design event promotions, and presented educational programs and teacher workshops. Later that same year, Riley accepted a



Riley Davenport is LGNC's newest staff member!

job as a Lead Environmental Educator at Wildlands Conservancy. In this role, she helped to facilitate the organization’s summer camp program. When the summer ended, she was one of the few seasonal staff who was asked to stay onboard as a part-time Educator. This opportunity gave her the chance to work with Wildlands Conservancy’s live animal collection and take the lead on virtual outreach during the early days of the pandemic.

Riley returned to Hawk Mountain as a part-time Educator during the summer of 2020 and, by February, was promoted to a full-time Educator & Raptor Specialist. In this capacity, she planned and led education programs of all kinds, designed materials for the website and social media, and managed education volunteers. As the summer camp coordinator, Riley planned, coordinated, and led Hawk Mountain’s eight-week camp program for over 150 students. She also worked closely with Hawk Mountain’s non-releasable raptor ambassador collection.

Riley shares that she is excited to move on to her next chapter at LGNC as the new Education & Outreach Coordinator: *“This position is a perfect culmination of all of my interests, and I feel like it has been a smooth and natural progression from my past role. I currently live in Allentown and getting to work with Allentown students has been really rewarding. I look forward to strengthening my relationship with our local community!”*

With Riley aboard, the LGNC staff is planning a year full of fun educational opportunities. Chad, Lauren, and Riley can’t wait to see you soon! 🦅

Three Board Members Retire, New Member Elected

by Dan R. Kunkle and Chad I. Schwartz

Alongside LGNC's recent staffing changes, we have also undergone a period of transition on our Board of Directors. Three long-time LGNC Board members – Cheryl Novak, Janet Maurer, and Barb Egerton – recently resigned. Although the Board continues to rebuild and fill vacant positions, we are pleased to welcome Brandon Fogal, who officially joined the Board in March.

Cheryl Novak

Cheryl Novak, with her husband Gary Gentile, moved to Jim Thorpe from North Carolina a little more than a decade ago shortly after she retired from a career as a school guidance counselor. It wasn't long before Cheryl was showing up at our Cabin Fever Book Club, and that was just the beginning. Shortly thereafter, she was helping set up for our Nature in Art shows, where she was also able to display her own artistic talent with pieces she entered in the show. She also could be found at almost every one of our annual festivals and events, often sharing her weaving skills or helping with some aspect of the program. Plus, she joined our Garden Group and has become a fixture at gardening workdays for the past decade.

In 2017, Dan Kunkle approached Cheryl asking her to serve on the Board of Directors, knowing full well that she had served on boards previously and had no desire to serve again. Well, something about Lehigh Gap Nature Center makes people say yes when they are called into service, and Cheryl said yes, starting her service in January 2018. She served on the Board for five years before retiring in 2022. She plans to continue as a volunteer with several of our programs, so you will still see Cheryl around the Osprey House on numerous occasions.

Janet Maurer

Janet and Ed Maurer moved to the Germansville area nearly 15 years ago and, in no time, they were visiting and volunteering at LGNC. They both started showing up on volunteer workdays and at festivals and other events. They became stalwart members of the Garden Group and could be seen on many occasions working in our beautiful native plant gardens. A former biology teacher, Jan also joined the Education Team and helped lead field trips for many years. As a Board member, she willingly served on our Finance Committee, helping develop our



We thank Cheryl Novak (left), Jan Maurer (center), and Barb Egerton (right) for their service on the Board.

budgets, oversee our investments, and make sure we remained fiscally sustainable. In addition, she has chaired a Membership Task Force for several years.

More recently, Janet founded a new program – Sessions for Seasoned Citizens. During our strategic planning, we learned that retired members were looking for more learning opportunities, and Jan responded with this program that quickly became popular. Jan will be moving away from the area but has promised to remain involved in some ways and to continue the Sessions programs for now. She joined the Board in 2016 and served for seven years, retiring at the end of 2022.

Barb Egerton

Barb Egerton first visited LGNC on field trips with her Northampton Area School District elementary school students in the mid-2000s. Since her retirement from the classroom, Barb has played an active role in supporting LGNC's educational programs as a dedicated member of the Education Team and various event planning committees. If you have attended any LGNC programs and events over the years, chances are you have encountered Barb, whether she was teaching a field trip station, leading a craft at our festivals, or selling native plants at our annual sale. She is just as busy behind the scenes helping to plan and prepare for many events. Beyond her involvement with LGNC's outreach, Barb is also an avid gardener and an active member of the Garden Group.

After serving for over a decade, Barb resigned from the Board in March of 2023. Barb and her husband, John, are long-time members of LGNC and look forward to continuing to volunteer. Barb is currently helping to plan upcoming 20th anniversary activities. Be sure look for Barb at LGNC's events later this year!

Welcome, Brandon Fogal!

The Board of Directors elected Brandon Fogal to a three-year term this February. Brandon grew up and lives in the Jim Thorpe area of Carbon County and earned a bachelor's degree in business at DeSales University. He is one of several co-owners of Pocono Whitewater, Skirmish USA, and Pocono Biking. For about



Brandon Fogal joined the Board in 2023.

ten years, he specifically ran the paintball retail operation for the company. More recently, he has become involved with all aspects of the business.

Brandon is an active member of Save Carbon County and serves on their steering committee. In addition, he worked on the Carbon Citizens for Water, Farms, and Land's successful campaign to promote a yes vote on the land preservation funding referendum in 2022. In addition to serving on the campaign committee, he also engaged individuals with the message explaining the benefits of the land conservation program and volunteered at the polls on election day to support the campaign.

In his spare time, Brandon is an avid hiker, camper, biker, wildlife enthusiast, and as he puts it, "a dedicated explorer of our beautiful home." And he strongly believes in the power and importance of science-based environmental education for people of all ages. As you can see, he is a perfect fit to be in a leadership role at LGNC. We look forward to working with you, Brandon. 🐾

Arboretum Revitalization Project Completed

by Lauren Foltz



If you have ventured out to the Arboretum on the far side of our Refuge this past year, you might have noticed a few changes throughout the spring and summer. With the help of Garden Group volunteers, Stewardship Interns, and a partner organization, we set out on a revitalization project with the goal of including native flowering perennials and some understory shrubs among the trees.

Revitalization started with tending to what was already there. Several trees and shrubs received fertilizer and fresh caging to protect them from deer. Then, we planted 23 perennials, 4 grasses, and 5 shrubs. Come late summer, we began removing the nonnative, cold-season grasses that carpeted the area to expose soil for native plant seeds. Seeding around our plantings will help to further suppress nonnative plants, though the Garden Group will continue to help with nonnative and invasive control.

For anyone who has not yet been to our Arboretum, this is a great time to go! Several Eagle Scouts have seen the potential of the site and built picnic tables and benches along the paths as well as a signboard for the parking lot.

You can explore what's blooming for the first time and enjoy some lunch. Over the summer, if you see the Garden Group, be sure to say hello, and if you have interest in joining the team, please feel free to email volunteering@lgnc.org. 🌿



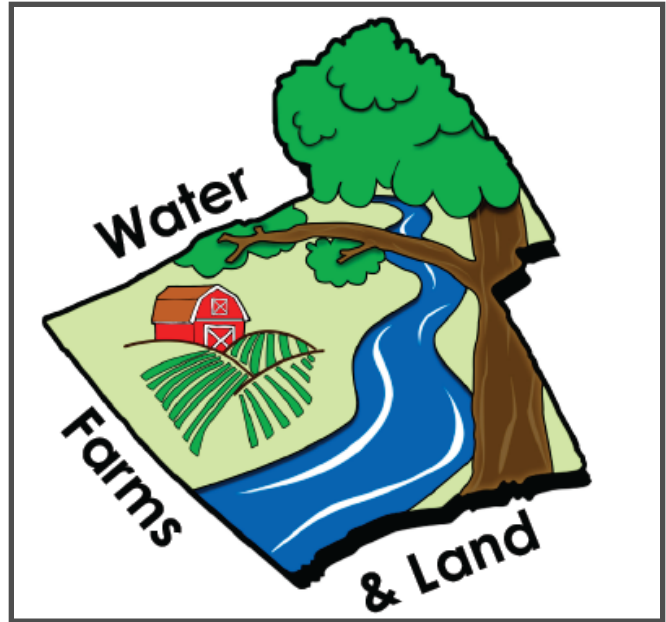
Open Space Referendum Passes

by Dan R. Kunkle

Last year, we told you about a referendum in Carbon County to support spending up to \$10 million over 20 years to support land conservation efforts in the county and urged our Carbon members to VOTE YES on the ballot measure. Vote yes they did, along with most of the remainder of Carbon’s voters. The referendum passed with an overwhelming 83% yes vote providing a mandate for the Carbon County Commissioners to set up an open space preservation program to match the already functioning farmland preservation program in the county.

In response, the Commissioners have authorized the program and set up an Open Space Advisory Board to advise them on which projects to approve. A similar Agricultural Land Preservation Board already exists. They also authorized the borrowing of up to \$10 million in support of this dual program. Retired LGNC Director, Dan Kunkle, and LGNC member Dennis DeMara are currently discussing the next steps with the County Commissioners.

The Board has begun meeting to set up the criteria for determining the conservation value of properties and to develop an application process for conservancies and municipalities who want



to apply for funding from the program. They will also evaluate the projects and send their recommendations to the Commissioners, who have the final say in project approvals. Meanwhile, the Commissioners already approved the borrowing of \$1 million to jump start the farmland preservation program which has suffered from a chronic low level of funding. 🏡



The Carbon County Open Space Referendum team celebrates on election night.

Remembering Two Conservation Heroes

by Dan R. Kunkle

Elissa Garofalo

We mourn the passing of one of our most important, long-time partners, Elissa Garofalo. When we began planning the Lehigh Gap Restoration Project in 2002, Elissa directed the Carbon County office of the Delaware & Lehigh National Heritage Corridor and became an early supporter, advisor, and friend. It was Elissa who nominated LGNC and the D&L Corridor for the Community Conservation Partnership Award from the U.S. Department of Interior, which we received in 2006. She also led the Lehigh Valley Greenways partnership in its early years and became Executive Director at the D&L Corridor. She always remained an important partner, a great colleague, and a friend. Perhaps Peter Kern said it best:

“Elissa was a unique Carbon County asset and a presence that will be missed. I can’t say enough about her contributions. She was pragmatic and firm in her convictions. I know I am not alone in recognizing her importance. May she rest in peace knowing that she made a difference.”



Elissa was a conservation partner and a key supporter of LGNC.

Ilse Stoll

LGNC also mourns the loss of long-time member, Ilse Stoll. Ilse was a pioneer in native plant gardening in the Lehigh Valley area and, for many years, held a native plant sale and undertook garden projects in Bethlehem. She was one of our featured speakers in our Speaker Series and donated numerous plants for our habitat gardens over the years.

Linda Frederick, the founder of the LGNC gardens, was inspired and influenced by Ilse. In Linda’s words, *“Ilse was my gardening buddy. She taught me about many things, and I thoroughly enjoyed helping with the Sand Island plantings, Greenway meadow, our own little “highline” at Steelstacks, and her church plant sales. She was funny, warm, quirky, and brilliant.”* 🌱



Ilse, shown presenting at LGNC, was an ardent proponent of native gardening.

Celebrating the Life of Our Pet Snake, Maize

by Chad I. Schwartz



Thank you for the memories,

Maize

We regret to share that LGNC's beloved pet corn snake, Maize, passed away peacefully on Thursday, December 8, 2022. Maize will be remembered fondly for his gentle and curious personality. As LGNC's long-time animal ambassador, Maize interacted with thousands of people in his lifetime, providing countless memories and educational experiences. For many of those people, a friendly encounter with Maize helped to overcome apprehension toward snakes and opened a doorway to appreciating the natural world.

Although we don't know his exact date of birth, Maize lived well into his 20s, exceeding the expected lifespan of a captive corn snake. Maize was donated by LGNC member Tom Gyory and, for many years, was our only animal ambassador. He was joined in more recent years by Happy, the eastern rat snake, and Fritz, another corn snake. Maize had a comfortable home in the LGNC lab, where he delighted and captivated the field trip attendees and other visitors who came across his enclosure.

Early on, Dan Kunkle and the education volunteers realized that Maize had the perfect temperament to provide hands-on experiences for visitors. At first, Maize made appearances at the Osprey House. But eventually, he regularly went on tour with the Education Team as they visited area schools, parks, and many other places. Maize

quickly gained a real following. Visitors and program attendees asked about him by name, and frequent requests led to many repeat visits. He was even once the star of an elementary school talent show. He was a celebrity!

In my role on the Education Team, I grew very close to Maize. As we visited the schools together, I saw firsthand how he positively impacted people of all ages. I saw many people's fears turn to joy as they held a snake for the very first time. And I saw him spark interest and fascination time and time again.

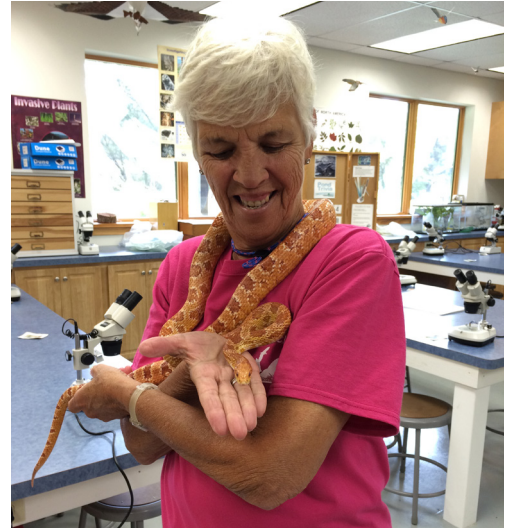
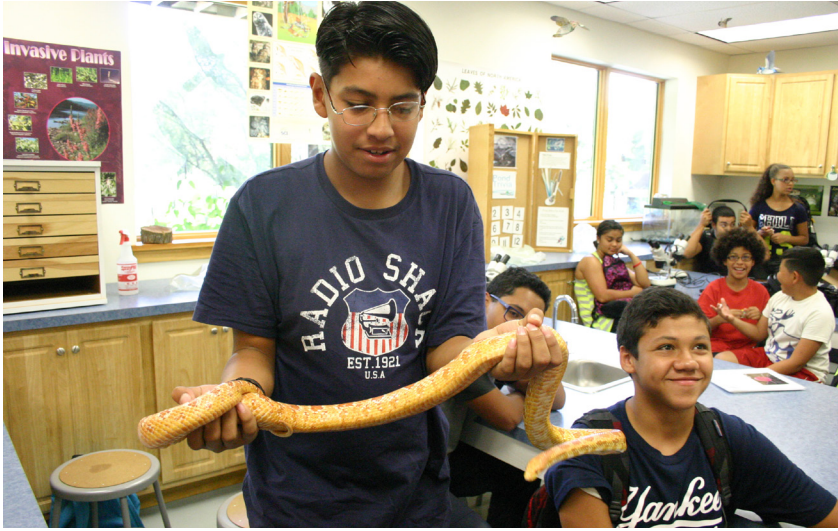
During the height of the pandemic, Maize was featured in several educational videos that we filmed for our YouTube channel. Students were also delighted when he made guest appearances during our webinars. Fortunately, Maize was able to impact many more people in person again before he passed, most recently during the fall 2022 field trip season.

Behind this special snake is a special volunteer who cared for Maize from the time he arrived at LGNC. Gerry Madden, with the help of Joe Mock, made sure Maize always had fresh water, a clean enclosure, and a good meal. Gerry respectfully laid Maize to rest in LGNC's habitat gardens on December 8. We thank Gerry, Joe, and other LGNC volunteers for taking such great care of our friend all these years.

And we thank Maize for being such an *amazing* animal ambassador! 🐍



Maize and his caretaker, Gerry, greet kids in the lab.



LGNC Partners with New Promise Corps

by Chad I. Schwartz

Last spring, LGNC was approached by Promise Neighborhoods of the Lehigh Valley (PNLV), an Allentown-based nonprofit, with an exciting idea. PNLV was setting out to pilot a new **Promise Corps** program focused on providing career pathways into the environmental field for Allentown area residents. According to PNLV, the vision for the Promise Corps is to provide “opportunities for environmental stewardship and workforce development to groups and individuals in the Lehigh Valley that have been historically barred from accessing the natural world and its resources.” This vision doesn’t just align perfectly with LGNC’s values, but it also falls directly in line with the goals of our Color of Nature Leadership Program. It made perfect sense for us to support this initiative any way we could.

During the pilot season, PNLV employed and trained three Promise Corps members, AJ, Ali, and Asjah (the “A Team”), to lead environmental stewardship and community service projects in the Lehigh Valley. LGNC first met the team in September, when they joined us for two training

hikes focused on ecological restoration, stewardship, and plant identification. Soon thereafter, the Promise Corps members assisted with LGNC’s Arboretum revitalization efforts. AJ, Ali, and Asjah joined Garden Group and Trail Team volunteers in removing turf grass and planting forbs, shrubs, and meadow seed mix. The Promise Corps team also loved helping with our fall field trip season, which gave them the chance to teach and mentor students from local schools. Although the “A Team” supported many other community partners across the Lehigh Valley, PNLV shared that working at LGNC was always a highlight of their week!

On January 6, 2023, AJ, Ali, and Asjah graduated from the Promise Corps program, marking the end of a very successful pilot season. We are very proud of all that the team accomplished at LGNC and throughout the region over a period of just a few months. PNLV hopes to expand the program in 2023. LGNC looks forward to building upon this partnership in the coming year and supporting the success of future Promise Corps cohorts. 🌲



The Promise Corps helps in the Arboretum; **Top Row:** Asjah Jones, Brian Birchak, Dennis Strong, and AJ Cox; **Bottom Row:** Ello Soto, Chad Schwartz, Lauren Foltz, Joan Strong, and Ali McKinney

Interns Recognized with LVPC Award

by Chad I. Schwartz

Our previous Lehigh Gap news update highlighted the great work of LGNC's 2022 seasonal education staff, who played a big role in the return of fully in-person programs. Two members of the team — Watershed Fellow, Donna Hanna, and Color of Nature Intern, Sherlyn Martinez — received some much-deserved recognition this past fall at a Lehigh Valley Planning Commission (LVPC) event. On November 15, 2022, Donna and Sherlyn were awarded LVPC's **FutureLV Hero Award** before an audience of several hundred professionals from the Greater Lehigh Valley. During the event, LVPC honored Donna and Sherlyn's inclusive outreach focused on serving residents of Allentown. Through both the Fellowship and the internship program, LGNC employs, trains, and mentors young adults from the City of Allentown to lead conservation outreach that is accessible to Allentown community members. Donna and Sherlyn led many programs in Allentown and throughout the region.



Donna (left) and Sherlyn (right) show their award.

Donna is currently employed in the science field and hopes to pursue a master's degree. Sherlyn plans to return to LGNC this year before pursuing a bachelor's degree in environmental science. We join LVPC in congratulating Donna and Sherlyn for their accomplishments. They represent the future of conservation. 🦋

Introducing the LV Native Plant Directory

Did you know the LGNC website is home to the Lehigh Valley's one-stop local resource for native plants? The **Lehigh Valley Native Plant Directory** is a project of the Master Gardeners in Lehigh and Northampton counties to promote the Homegrown National Park (HNP). The Directory is updated regularly and accessible free of charge on lgnc.org.

HNP, founded by University of Delaware entomology professor Doug Tallamy, is a nationwide nonprofit organization. HNP's goal is to encourage landowners to plant native plants, as well as remove invasive plants to help regenerate biodiversity, restore ecosystems, and protect the food chain. Without insects, we cannot grow food.



Visit the Directory at lgnc.org/lvnpd-1 to discover where to learn about native plants, see native plants in the landscape, and purchase native plants for your home!

New and Renewed Members

Thank you to everyone who renewed their membership with LGNC. Your support really makes a difference at the Lehigh Gap. The following joined, renewed above the basic or family level, or contributed to a special fund:

New Members

Mary Arlia
Lisa Beltz
Bella Badal
William Dimm
Gerard & Andrea Donchez
Lynn Eberhardt
Carol Etheridge
Cindy Freed
Michael Hagearty
Nicky Holmes
Rich Hyde
Regina Krause
Caryn Kunz
Joseph & Ann Lampi
Carolyn Lampi-Seyler
Lauren Neidert
Laurie Peters-Beers
Larry & Marie Ruch
Germaine Salsberg
Duane Sedlock
Stacy Stark
Kevin Stump
John & Michelle Tegan
Sara Unangst
Naomi Winch
Kelly Zayvelev

Renewed at Sustaining Level (\$100 or more)

Robert & Jacqueline Adams
Appalachian Mountain Club
Kevin & Sandra Artz
Tracey Ash & Jim Foster
Robert Astleford
Dennis and Debra Barr
Cynthia Berger
Ribello M. Bertoni
David & Jane Borbe
Beverly Cole
Joseph Colosi
Guy de Bruyn
Drew & Julie Everett
Phil Fair
Linda Finley
Michael & Jodi Foltz
Lynn German Long
Anne Griffin
Robert Gusztaw
Janet Hermann
Chris Hoffman & Mary Rooney
Pamela Hoffner
Jeff Hopkins
Carl & Pat James
Robert Keith
Joann Kercksmar

Jim Kikuchi & Mary Getty
Janet & Jeff Kline
Robin Koch & Charlene Bergstresser
Lehigh Valley Kayak and Canoe Club
Sandra Magill
John & Marie Matthews
Janet & Ed Maurer
Michael McCarroll
Janet Minnich
Susan Minnich
Jay Mitchell & Julie Federico
Matthew Mottola
Priscilla Offen & Patrick Clark
Alison and Paul Pierpoint
Nicole Pudvah
Bruce & Susan Rabenold
Rural Preservation Association of Northwestern Lehigh County

Robert Sanicki
Benjamin Shelly
Lee & Deb Siglin
Roxane Snyder
Laura Stearns
Nancy & Rachel Taras
John & Ann Marie Traynor
John Wasilowsky

Renewed at Contributing Level (\$250 or more)

George Beam & Family
Donald Bowe
Fritz & Jennifer Brock
David Cundall
Tom & Judy Dwyer
Jane Flood
Aleksandra Hanas
Ronald P. Hillegass
George & Kathy Elliston
William Schwab

Renewed at Patron Level (\$500 or more)

Barb Fogal
Marilyn Jordan
Priscilla Kistler
Carl & Marilee Oplinger
John Ruszin
Arthur & Fannie Schisler

Renewed at Golden Eagle Level (\$1,000 or more)

Jim & Lisa Andrews

Paul & Cleo Fogal
Lee & Dan Kunkle
Lorraine Mineo
Cheryl Novak
Kathie Romano

Lehigh Gap Fund

Rodney Fritzingler – monthly donation for car sales and referrals

Rick Gaeta
Kathryn & Frank J Hall
Robert E. Hoopes
Marilyn Jordan
Carol & Jeff Schnaiter
Brent & Linda Sensey
Clarence & Florence Smith
Ken Zellner & Family

Education Fund

Barbara Bollinger
Peter Christine
Terrie Cinicola
Lyla Derr
Kathryn & Frank J Hall
Ronald P. Hillegass
Pamela Hoffner
Diane & Dave Husic
Marilyn Jordan
Ronald Kline
Daniel Nickischer
Reading Escapades & Math Explorers, Inc.
Carol & Jeff Schnaiter
Clarence & Florence Smith
Jed & Janet Starner
Lynn Wilson
David Stech & Jill Youngken

Michal Kubik Memorial Fund

Linda Finley

Mural Fund

David Altrichter
Kevin & Sandra Artz
David & Jane Borbe
Judy Cernobyl
Thomas Davies
James Davis
Anne Griffin
Elsa Kerchner
Nancey Kinlin & Carl Cappelletti
Robin Koch & Charlene Bergstresser
Matthew MacConnell
Gerald Mistal
Mary O'Donnell-Miller

Eric Pettit
Rachel Roland
Deborah Rosene
William & Joyce Schwab
Sean Sicher
Slatington Lions Club
Joan & Dennis Strong
Jennifer Wheary
Kristin & Gerry Wild
Cherie Yasko
Kenneth Zellner

General Donations

Lydia Boileau
Frederic Buse
Jeffrey & Annette Drobil
Kathryn Hauck
Peter & Nancy Herzog
Mary Herman
Ronald Krikorian
David Stech & Jill Youngken
Clinton Walker
Faith Zerbe
Andrea Zugale

NOTE: Donations received after March 30, 2023 will be acknowledged in the next Wildlife Activist.



Donations

Grants and Contributions

\$10,000 or more

- Jan & Glenn Maurer (Education)
- The Neffs National Bank (EITC donation)
- PPL Electric Utilities (EITC donation)
- William Penn Foundation (Education)

\$5,000 to \$9,999

- Ocean Spray (Education)
- Martin Guitar Charitable Foundation (Education)

\$2,500 to \$4,999

- County of Lehigh (Education)
- Just Born Quality Confections (Education)
- Keystone Savings Foundation (Technology)
- Lee & Dan Kunkle Charitable Fund (Maintenance)
- Lehigh County (Education)
- LGNC 10K Trail Run (Maintenance)
- Washington Township (Capital)

\$1,000 to \$2,499

- Anonymous (Operations)
- Bass Pro Shops & Cabelas (Education)
- Behler Foundation
- Mickley/Fravel Charitable Trust (Maintenance)
- Rett & Priscilla Oren
- Kent Roberts
- Lehigh Valley Audubon Society (Education)
- Woman's Club of Slatington (Education)

In-Kind Donations

- **Elizabeth Fleming** created volunteer training materials.
- **Rodney Fritzing** continues to donate \$5 to the Lehigh Gap Fund for every car he sells at Rentschler Chevrolet, Chrysler, Dodge, Jeep.
- **Attorneys Holly Heintzelman and Marvin Schwartz** provide legal services.
- **Dan Kunkle** made nest box kits for camp.
- **Bonnie Pancoast** created educational displays and donated materials for events.
- **Kathie Romano and Donna Gasser** made the quilt for this year's raffle.

Special Donations

- **Dennis Blose** donated a taxidermy deer and muskie.
- **Anita Collins** donated beekeeping supplies.
- **Barb Egerton** donated paintings.
- **Rick Gaeta** donated black oil sunflower seed.
- **Muhlenberg College** donated a projector and screen.
- **Nick Rosato** donated an insect scope.
- **Donna Snyder** donated a historic photograph of the Gap.



Thrivent Financial Customers

For any LGNC members or friends who are also members of Thrivent Financial (formerly Lutheran Brotherhood and AAL), please note that you can direct your Thrivent Dollars to Lehigh Gap Nature Center. Our official IRS name is **Wildlife Information Center, Inc.** and that is the name listed on the Thrivent website. Log on to your account at *Thrivent.com* and click on "Memberships and Benefits" and "Thrivent Choice." Thrivent must make donations from their profits to nonprofit organizations. The funds do not come from your account. Please direct your Thrivent Choice Dollars to Wildlife Information Center (Lehigh Gap Nature Center), Slatington, PA.

Volunteer Service

Lehigh Gap Nature Center gratefully acknowledges the volunteer service of the following individuals *since September 2023*: **Jennifer Ketay Brock** for proofreading/editing the *Activist*; **Access Services and CARES** for helping to keep the Osprey House clean and tidy; **Anita Collins**, Personnel Committee Chair, for her help with the hiring process and other Board members who supported the staffing transition; **Lee & Dan Kunkle** for overseeing 20th anniversary planning and **Anita Collins, Barb Egerton, Brandon Everett, Donna Gasser, Diane Husic, Jen Lansing, Terry Master, Kathie Romano, and Nancy Taras** for serving on the planning team; **Bonnie Pancoast** for serving as our Volunteer Liaison and for helping to plan events; **Jane Borbe** for serving as Info Specialist Coordinator; **Barb Wiemann** for serving as our Archivist; snake keeper, **Gerry Madden**; **Al Bodzin, Barb Egerton, John Gallagher, Donna Gasser, Terry Kloiber, Lee & Dan Kunkle, Cheryl Novak, Bonnie Pancoast, Ashlyn Thomas, and the Palmerton NJHS** for their help with Migration Fest; **Dr. Mike Martinez** for coordinating the 10k Trail Run and **Lisa Beltz, Birdie Diehl, Gary Nagy, Lisa Steigerwalt, Marie Tweed, and the Palmerton NJHS** for helping on race day; **Barb Egerton, Donna Gasser, Lee & Dan Kunkle, Cheryl Novak, Bonnie Pancoast, Anne Zagarella, and the Palmerton NJHS** for helping with the Holiday Open House; **Bob Astleford, Rob Keith, Corbin, Devin & Ron Kline, John Leskosky, and Grant Stevenson** for participating in the Winter Bird Survey; **Nancy Taras** for leading the Cabin Fever Book Club; the **48 families** who participated in the 2023 Feeder Watch; **Jan & Ed Maurer** for leading the Sessions for Seasoned Citizens; **all of the speakers** who have participated in our 2022/23 Speaker Series; **Andy Harakal, Jeff Kindler, Gary Nagy, Aiden Sell, and Marie Tweed** for helping with the Climb it for Climate 5k Trail Run; **Elizabeth Fleming** for developing new training materials to better support LGNC's volunteer teams; **Rick Morrissey** for supporting Hawk Count

volunteer recruitment; and, of course, our **Board of Directors and Board of Advisors**.

It is difficult to thank all our wonderful volunteers enough; you are the heart and soul of Lehigh Gap Nature Center.

Scout Projects

Olivia Schaeffer – nature lending library

Trail Crew Volunteers

Dave Chalk	Simon Molloy
Jeff Kindler	Dennis Strong

Garden Group

Cynthia Berger	Janet Minnich
Denise Dorwart	Cheryl Novak
Barb Egerton	Bonnie Pancoast
Deb Hamburger	Chris Polhemus
Torin Heiland	Leon Rodenbach
John Hoffer	Kathie Romano
Rochelle Kaplan	Melissa Starkey
Jennifer Lansing	Laura Stearns
Ed & Jan Maurer	Joan Strong

Education Team

Cynthia Berger	Jan Maurer
Terrie Cinicola	Bonnie Pancoast
Elizabeth Fleming	Carol Schnaiter
Lee & Dan Kunkle	Melissa Starkey
Jen Lansing	Ashlyn Thomas

Information Specialists

Dan Ahrens	Lish Howard
Lisa Beltz	Marilyn Jordan
Cynthia Berger	Gary Nagy
Jane Borbe	Cheryl Novak
Mary Coover	Dan Nickischer
Jim Gabovitz	Tim Sidor
Donna Gasser	Nancy Thatcher
Lynn & Andy Harakal	Marie Tweed

NOTE: *With all this activity, we are likely to miss some of our volunteers. Let us know if we did, and we will add the names to the next Activist volunteer page.*



Interested in volunteering?

Contact Volunteer Liaison, Bonnie Pancoast, at volunteering@lgnc.org

Lehigh Gap Nature Center Business Members - 2023

Members

Cornerstone Therapeutic Massage & Bodywork, Lehighton, 484-347-6228
Hager Furniture, Palmerton, 610-826-2900
Reading Escapades & Math Explorers, Inc., Palmerton, 610-826-7323
Campton-Schisler Funeral Home, Palmerton, 610-826-2377
Schisler Funeral Home, Northampton, 610-262-2727

Supporters

Attorney Holly Heintzelman, Lehighton, 610-377-3111
Bechtel's Pharmacy, Inc., Slatington, 610-767-4121
Becky's Drive In, Walnutport, 610-767-2249
Bennett Family Properties LLC, Lehighton, 610-377-7700
Edge of the Woods Native Plant Nursery, Orefield, 610-395-2570
Hallman's Service Station, Slatington, 610-767-7667
Key Bank, Walnutport, 610-767-9630
George I. LaRose Insurance Ltd., Palmerton, 610-826-2397
Law Offices of Steckel and Stopp, Slatington, 610-767-3861
Livengood Excavators, Walnutport, 610-767-5073
Lizard Creek Campground, Lehighton, 570-386-2911
The Neffs National Bank, Neffs, PA, 610-767-3875
Parkland Nurseries, LLC 610-395-2717
PenTeleData, www.ptd.net, 1-800-281-3564
Rentschler Chevrolet Chrysler Jeep Dodge Ram, Slatington, 610-767-1171
Shabbick & Stehle, Attorneys at Law, Palmerton, 610-826-3122
Shea's Hardware, Inc., Palmerton, 610-826-2412
Sherry Dental PC, Lehighton, 570-386-6910
Steckel and Stopp: Attorneys at Law, Slatington, PA 610-767-3861
St. John Neumann Regional School, Palmerton/Slatington, 610-826-2354
T.K. Thomas Funeral Home, Palmerton, 610-826-2270
Tribe Yoga, Fogelsville, 484-239-8711
Truist Bank, Walnutport, Lehighton, Palmerton
Wagner's Auto Body, Orefield, 610-398-3166
William G. Schwab & Associates, Attorneys at Law, Lehighton, 610-377-5200

***We encourage our members to support these local businesses that support
Lehigh Gap Nature Center.***

Endowment Fund Update

Thanks to numerous donations, memorial gifts, bequests, leaf tile sponsorships, designation of Thrivent Dollars and Amazon Smiles purchases, quilt raffle proceeds, and a major donation to the Endowment Fund from an anonymous source, the LGNC Memorial/Endowment Fund now *exceeds \$1.5 million* in value. We have reached our medium-term goal for the Fund, and now have our sights set on a long-term goal of \$2 million. The current Board and staff are very interested in building a sufficient Endowment Fund to ensure the long-term sustainability of Lehigh Gap Nature Center. Donations go to the main Endowment Fund unless designated for one of our two special sub-funds – **Internship and Arboretum/Gardens**.

Memorial/Endowment Fund donations were received from the following: Lee & Dan Kunkle *in memory of Brian Taras*; Constance White; Diane Husic; Carol & Jeff Schnaiter; Kathryn & Frank J Hall; Benjamin Shelly; Francis Fischer; Diane Mellen *in memory of Paul Hoopes*; Peter Stangherlin; Robert E. Hoopes; Lynn Wilson; Richard Habermann; Linda Freedman, Dennis & Diane Duda, Barbara Malt, Kathleen Steele, David & Claudia Steckel, and John & Aurelia Stella, *in memory of Ilse Stoll*; Cheryl Novak; and Barry Shabbick & Angela Stehle *in memory of Ronald G. Reitz*. Thrivent Choice Dollars were directed to LGNC by Jeffrey Kindler and Barbara Wiemann.

Anyone can help build the Endowment Fund by making donations in memory or honor of family members and friends. **Please consider naming Lehigh Gap Nature Center as the charity of choice for memorial donations or to honor someone on a birthday, holiday, or special occasion.**

Individuals can obtain significant tax benefits from donations of such items as appreciated stocks, real estate, whole life insurance policies, or other valuable assets that would be taxable if sold or redeemed by the owner. You may also want to talk with us about charitable remainder trusts and other planned giving opportunities that allow you to donate assets in return for a lifetime annuity.

Another way of helping the financial needs of Lehigh Gap Nature Center is to include our organization in your will. Donations can include anything of value such as real estate, stocks and

bonds, works of art, or coin and stamp collections. Suitable language could include the following: "I give, devise, and bequeath to Lehigh Gap Nature Center (Wildlife Information Center, Inc.), a nonprofit corporation exempt under Internal Revenue Code Section 501(c)(3), whose present address is P.O. Box 198, Slatington, PA 18080-0198, the sum of \$ _____" and/or (specifically describe property). Or you may decide to designate a percentage of your estate as a bequest to LGNC.

Members and friends who have included us in their wills or made us a beneficiary of a trust or insurance policy become members of the Osprey Society. Please let us know if you have named LGNC as a beneficiary, and we will acknowledge that future donation by naming you as a member of the Osprey Society. Current Osprey Society members are Dan Kunkle and Stephen Boudreau.

Endowment Fund donations are gifts that permanently help generate income for Lehigh Gap Nature Center's operations. **This is one of the most important ways you can help LGNC – donate to the Endowment Fund now and/or make a bequest to us in your will. Thank you for your support!**



NOTE: Donations and memberships received after March 30, 2023 will be acknowledged in the next *Wildlife Activist*.

Please Support Lehigh Gap Nature Center!

Lehigh Gap Nature Center is a member-supported, 501(c)(3) nonprofit conservation organization. Our mission is "to improve the quality of life of present and future generations by protecting the wildlife and enhancing the habitats of our Refuge, the neighboring Kittatinny Ridge, and the Lehigh River Watershed through conservation, education, research, and outdoor recreation." Our office is located in the Osprey House at the Lehigh Gap Wildlife Refuge, our 750+ acre wildlife sanctuary. All contributions are *tax-deductible*.

Membership benefits include:

- Invitations to exclusive members-only events and priority registration for all events
- Discounts on all items in our nature shop and all program fees
- Email notifications about events
- Our unique membership magazines or newsletter*
- **The satisfaction of supporting our nationally recognized conservation and education work!**

*Friends receive our newsletter; all other levels receive *Wildlife Activist* and *American Hawkwatcher* magazines.

LGNC Membership & Donation Form

Renewal

New Member

Donation Level

- Friend of LGNC \$25
- Individual \$40
- Family \$50
- Sustaining \$100
- Contributing \$250
- Patron \$500
- Golden Eagle \$1,000

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

ADDITIONAL SPECIAL DONATIONS

\$ _____ **Educational Fund** – supports the Center's education programs and internships

\$ _____ **Endowment Fund** – interest used to operate the Nature Center

\$ _____ **Capital Fund** – supports Refuge maintenance and improvements

Please mail this form with check payable to:
Lehigh Gap Nature Center, P.O. Box 198, Slatington, PA 18080

**“Conservation is a journey,
not a destination.”**

-George Schaller



**Lehigh Gap
Nature Center**

(Wildlife Information Center)

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610-760-8889 • www.lgnc.org • mail@lgnc.org

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