



The Horizon

What's New with NBLT?



North Branch Land Trust has seen plenty of positive change over the past year—building upon the success of our Mission's foundation to conserve the precious lands, waters and landscapes in NEPA that sustain us.

Executive Director Ellen Ferretti came to NBLT in November of 2021 and, working with key partners, set a goal to complete two projects that have long held an keen interest to Land Trust supporters: "I knew if we build on prior momentum and complete either one, we'll have hit the ground running." And WOW did that momentum take! One of these goals? Help Wyoming County see its FIRST State Park at the Howland Preserve. Learn more about how Howland Preserve will become Vosburg State Park, the FIRST State Park in Wyoming County (and how it became a Preserve in the first place) on page 3.

Ferretti's second goal was the conservation of the forested lands surrounding the Huntsville Reservoir. Despite being the iconic horizon of the Back Mountain, the forests surrounding the Huntsville Reservoir were not conserved—until now! NBLT and the Pennsylvania American Water Company are working together to conserve more than 200 acres of riparian buffer forests that, aside from the natural beauty they bring to the landscape, not only work to slow and filter rainwater but also provide natural

habitat for hundreds of native species. The conservation area will also include a small designated public access point to allow visitors to safely walk or hike off the busy roads at one end of the Reservoir.



Right down the street from Huntsville Reservoir, Forest Echo Bird Sanctuary has also seen major improvements thanks in no small part to private donations. Arborist Bob Martin removed unsafe diseased and dead trees, while allowing some natural fells to provide important habitat for birds, insects and small mammals, while Native Creations helped manage the invasive Tree of Heaven that had taken up residence at the preserve. With the hard work of contractors and NBLT staff, Forest Echo Bird Sanctuary now boasts a small parking area, a freshly blazed 1k trail, and some much happier wildlife.

A Riparian Restoration and Education grant from American Water Charitable Foundation also assisted Penn State Energy and Sustainability intern Melissa Lopez to host three Bio-

Blitzes at Hanover Crossings, Howland, and Forest Echo Preserves, where community members use mobile tech to catalog and document species. Lopez and her volunteers have not only identified hundreds of species, but also cleared litter from preserves and documented their general health. Keep an eye on your email for Melissa's results and other chances to engage as a citizen scientist!



Thanks to the engagement of community conservationists, North Branch Land Trust is also pleased to welcome an additional 40 acres of conserved private land. Join us at the 2023 Annual Dinner and Auction to catch an exclusive interview with Will Conyngham, one of NBLT's newest easement holders.



A Note From Executive Director Ellen Ferretti:

Looking back at this first year at North Branch Land Trust I could not be more thankful of our accomplishments. North Branch Land Trust has long been an important pioneer and partner in the protection of our forests, fields, farms and waters, as well as nature based outdoor recreation, in Northeastern Pennsylvania, creating a community of conservation connections and partnerships that has truly laid the groundwork for these successes. And knowing that these places, from the life-giving drinking water of Huntsville Reservoir to the soul-sustaining vistas of Vosburg Neck State Park, will be conserved for our communities, the next generation and beyond... that's the most satisfying news of all.

North Branch continues to find new ways to connect our community and our landscapes! Televised interviews with Fox56 "Great Outdoors" and publications in Times Leader, WeConservePA, Pennsylvania Environmental Digest, DiscoverNEPA and more have shared our mission with new conservationists. Creative projects like Melissa Lopez's BioBlitz have inspired citizen scientists to engage with our lands while our revitalized digital presence has sparked "natural" curiosity about our own backyards.

We look forward to next year with gratitude for what has been and curiosity for what can be. Please send us your thoughts so we can truly be a community of conservationists – with a love for and focus on making our home, Northeastern Pennsylvania, a better place to live!

NBLT in the News: How Controlled Burns Could Save a Species



(LUZERNE COUNTY, PA) On a late spring morning in a small field of stunning wildflowers, Isabella Petitta and her lab partner are keener on the insects zipping around from bud to bud. Bees of all shapes and sizes are sneaking into the blue shell-like blooms of the *Lupinus perennis*. The researchers had already recorded their floral data. Now, they are watching the insects pollinating them. By November, they will be setting this same field on fire using a highly controlled protocol for safety. The researchers are from Penn State's Ecology Program who traveled to Luzerne County to collect data from one of their six historical lupine population research sites. Their goal is to examine the effects of controlled burns and fencing on the restoration of lupine populations in Pennsylvania.

This plant is an important host to native butterflies, including Frosted Elfins, Dusky Wings, and the endangered Karner blue. While habitat destruction and fragmentation are the

biggest threats to these plants, the problem that this research team is examining happens to be a *lack* of wildfires. "In a strange way, we've just gotten too good at stopping fires," Isabella said. Lupine beans are incredibly tough, and those seeds often need to be roughed up for germination success. Isabella noted that there are a variety of natural and unnatural ways to disturb the seeds for germination being investigated, yet mowing or encouraging wildfires to burn for a time are not part of what traditionally comes to mind when we think of habitat restoration.

Isabella was preparing for her Graduate Program at Penn State when she became involved in this project. "In the past, one of my co-advisors, Autumn Sabo, had worked with lupines in Minnesota and my other co-advisor Margarita López-Urbe, is an expert in wild bee ecology and evolution. From there the research team developed with a variety of specializations including Forestry, Botany, Entomology, and Genetics. And collectively, with the other organizations involved, we had all the knowledge to investigate the lupine system." Isabella's specialty is entomology.

On site visits, Isabella noticed larger, more dense populations of bees from

the *Osmia* genus. Bees have special hairs for collecting pollen, and while most bees have hair on their legs, *Osmia* have fuzzy abdomens. "When they enter the shell-like flower, the anthers with pollen are pointing upwards, and so the pollen ends up on the underside of the bee. It's possible that *Osmia* are lupine specialists based on the location of these hairs." I asked if the team is one of the first to consider the direct relationship between lupines and *Osmia*. Isabella hesitated, "It's not something that we have found highly reported in existing literature related to lupines, but this genus is known to specialist on the plant family Fabaceae." Incredibly modest, but the truth is this sort of integrated approach considering entomology, genetics, and other fields in addition to a botanist's expertise allows this study to consider a much wider scope of variables than it had in the past.



Photographs by Nash Turley

This Conservation Easement isn't the only NBLT conserved land of ecological significance! So far this year, NBLT has facilitated environmental studies of delicate plant habitats, regional water quality, and more with organizations like Penn State University, Luzerne Conservation District, Eastern Pennsylvania Coalition for Abandoned Mine Reclamation, and Longwood Gardens.

Happy Trails, Rylan Coker!



We wish a bittersweet happiest of trails to Rylan Coker! Rylan has been with NBLT for over 11 years and has overseen the conservation of thousands of acres of land and water, as well facilitated the planting of thousands of seedlings.

Rylan has represented NBLT and our Mission on various committees with many organizations and, through those partnerships, has expanded the breadth and depth of our conservation work. Northeastern Pennsylvania is better for it.

We will all miss Rylan and wish him the very best in this next chapter of his life.

Thank you NBLT Board of Directors

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Howland Preserve Joins the PA State Parks System

North Branch Land Trust is overjoyed that PA State Parks will shepherd Howland Preserve into the future for public access and conservation. Howland Preserve will be the first State Park in Wyoming County, offering important access to not only natural trails, but also the Susquehanna River to a larger segment of the public who thoroughly enjoy visiting the great outdoors through PA State Parks.

uniquely beautiful property for almost twenty years. Now, we are proud to be a part of this historic moment as Wyoming County receives its first state park. We have every confidence that the Howland Preserve will become an important destination and provide outdoor recreational opportunities for residents and visitors alike. This will also contribute to the economic vitality and environmental health of the local Tunkhannock community and the greater Susquehanna watershed. We are grateful to Governor Wolf and the entire DCNR team. We extend a special thank you to Senator Lisa Baker whose vision and determination saw this project through to the end."

The area now known as Vosburg Neck was first owned by seven Connecticut families after the Revolutionary War, including Abraham Vosburgh, a Revolutionary soldier for whom the Neck is now named. The region had since supported various agricultural and farm lands—including one owned by 27th Governor of Pennsylvania William Sproul. In the early half of the 1800s, the transportation of timber and coal increased traffic in the Wyoming Valley, and by the 1880s, a Norfolk Southern Railroad Tunnel on Vosburg Neck shortened the journey. The Tunnel remains a favored landmark for those visiting the preserve.

Ellen Ferretti, Executive Director NBLT: "I echo all our Board Chair's comments. I simply cannot wait for a time in the near future when I visit this new PA DCNR State Park and see the faces of children of all ages as they look with awe on the mighty Susquehanna River and the magnificent forested hills that enshrine it at this



iconic location; to see the paddlers enjoying the easy access to the water and all that lies beyond; to know that this land will be protected and enjoyed as part of the PADCNR State Park system....forever. I also want to extend my heartfelt thanks to Senator Lisa Baker for her efforts to bring a new State Park to the people and towns of the Northern Tier, as well as the visitors and tourists who will visit from well beyond the region. What a beautiful future awaits."

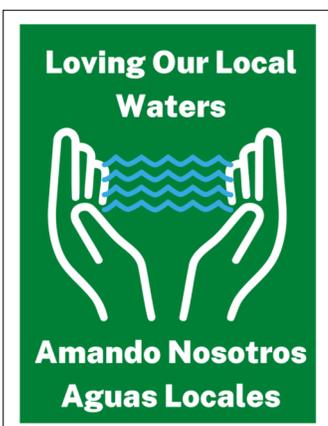


North Branch Land Trust took ownership of the property in 2003. Ernest E. Howland's love of this property was evidenced by his last Will and Testament and his request that the land be deeded to North Branch Land Trust and "never be subdivided and that any transfer or sale of said property contain a conservation easement." Mr Howland's

parents, Chet and Marion purchased Riverside Farm in 1941. Throughout the first half of the 1900s, the property was mostly open farm fields. In the 1950's and 1960's, Riverside Farm was an angler's destination as Ernie Howland's parents operated an "up-scale" boat livery business profiled in the Pennsylvania Angler, October 1952 and Field & Stream, July 1954.

Christina Taylor, NBLT Board Chair: "The North Branch Land Trust is tremendously excited that the Howland Preserve will join Pennsylvania's awarding winning State Park system. We have been honored to protect and steward this

Loving Our Local Waters/Amando Nosotros Aguas Locales: Design Contest



North Branch Land Trust is committed to encouraging the next generation of conservation leadership right in our backyard. Thanks to a grant from PPL Foundation, North Branch is able to deepen our commitment!

About the Contest:

- Use a standard sheet of 8.5"x11" paper
- Submit your design as a pdf or image to info@nblt.org. Please include signage text as the email subject line.
- Designs must promote environmental stewardship such as carrying out trash, staying on trails, keeping waterways clean, etc.
- Designs featuring non-native species will not be considered.

In order to protect our land, water, air, and all the living things that inhabit them, we need to feel a connection to it! What do you treasure most about NEPA's natural resources? What would you say to convince someone to protect them?

Students living and studying in NEPA can submit their stewardship designs in English, Spanish or both!

All submissions will be featured on our website, and lucky finalists may see their signs installed at NBLT preserves. Are you a NEPA educator looking to bring environmentalism into your classroom? Contact us for a free digital download of our "If I were a Raindrop" activity book.

Events We've Enjoyed

VIRTUAL INFORMATION SESSION

Family-Owned Forests and the Carbon Market

Tuesday, October 25 at 6:30p

Virtual information session with Q&A to follow

Register now: nblt.org/events

Forest Echo Bird Sanctuary

Leaf Peeper Hike

Oct. 8
11-2:30

West Center Hill Road
Dallas, PA

Fee: \$5

Members free

Hike Forest Echo Bird Sanctuary during peak fall foliage!

Explore the freshly blazed trails, photograph native birds, or simply take in the colors of the season with friends.

North Branch Land Trust will provide trail maps, identification guides, and hot coffee and cocoa.

Leashed dogs welcome!

RSVP at nblt.org/events



HANOVER CROSSINGS BIO-BLITZ SEPTEMBER 2022



244

IDENTIFIED SPECIES

PLANTS: 183
FUNGI: 29
INSECTS: 7
ARACHNIDS: 2
REPTILES: 2
MOLLUSKS: 4
AMPHIBIANS: 3
FISH: 1
BIRDS: 9
MAMMALS: 2
OTHER: 2

Saturday
June 18



Join us to Create a Nature Mosaic during
Riverfest
2022

11 am - 5 pm



Wednesday, Sept. 14 at 5:30 pm

NEPA BARN BANQUET

Friedman Farms
138 Wyoming Rd, Dallas, PA



We Look Forward to Seeing You Soon!



251 Huntsville-Idetown Rd.
Dallas, Pa 18612

