

# VISTAS

A publication of Allegheny Land Trust

Autumn 2011



## From the Executive Director

### CONSERVATION IN ACTION... SKIPPING STONES

When I was a little kid I used to spend lots of summer hours throwing rocks, pebbles and skipping stones in a pond. As I grew up I evolved into a pretty serious stone skipper who would usually out-skip my competition. I still consider myself as an accomplished skipper. The secret is finding a slightly concave smooth stone with a little bit of slick algae on one side. What a thrill to watch that perfect stone skip and arc its way across the smooth surface of the pond, starting with long graceful leaps touching down for a split second only to launch itself into the air again leaving behind little ripples in its wake. Then in a final arcing series of short staccato skips it reaches the opposite shore as it succumbs to gravity. Sometimes the last splashdown of the stone is followed by a big ker-plunk created by an annoyed bull frog that was startled from its insect zapping hideaway in the reeds.

In addition to the rush of adrenaline and sense of pride and accomplishment after a serious skipping competition, I also loved to just watch the ripples from a single pebble radiating outward in unison

See "From the Executive Director", page 7

## Stewardship in Action—Get Involved

by Emilie Cooper, Stewardship Coordinator

People constantly ask me, "What is stewardship?" and, "What does a Stewardship Coordinator do?" Well, beginning with a dictionary, Merriam-Webster defines "stewardship" as "the careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one's care." So, as a Stewardship Coordinator, I am organizing the responsible care and management of ALT's protected landscapes.

You might then ask yourself, "Where does the ACTION come in? How can one act on Stewardship?" ALT has your answer! Just this season, ALT offered more than 10 different opportunities to get involved in an organized stewardship event. This included removing invasive Japanese Barberry bushes on Irwin Run with a Weed Wrench (so much fun!), installing new benches at Dead Man's Hollow, cutting vines at Audubon Greenway, and understanding the science behind the Abandoned Mine Drainage system at Wingfield Pines...and then passing on that knowledge. But this was not the only stewardship ACTION our protected properties enjoyed.

See "Stewardship", page 3



PHOTO BY EMILIE COOPER

## Conservation in Action

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Do you know what this is? See page 6 to find out!



## Future Leadership in Action

**MAX VIETMEIER** interned this summer with Allegheny Land Trust as the first John Hamm Intern. Max grew up in Whitehall and attended Baldwin-Whitehall School District. Constantly spending time outdoors throughout his childhood is where he feels his passion for the outdoors began. Max followed his passion and completed a Bachelor of Science degree in Wildlife and Fisheries Science from Penn State University in the spring of 2011. Max's work focused on maintaining and improving the Wingfield Pines Abandoned Mine Drainage system and assisting the Washington County Conservation District with multiple projects throughout the Chartiers Creek Watershed. Max says, "I'm excited about working with and learning from multiple agencies involved with the watershed."



PHOTO BY EMILIE COOPER



PHOTO BY EMILIE COOPER

**JOHN OFFICER** works at Allegheny Land Trust as a Communications and Conservation Intern. Most of his time has been spent updating the website, writing the E-News, and most notably, working on coordinating a two-week blogspot for The Heinz Endowments during the first two weeks in August.

John grew up in Hanover, New Hampshire and graduated from the College of Wooster (Wooster, OH) with a bachelor's degree in philosophy. He has long been interested in the environment and outdoor recreation. His senior thesis argued for a more "environmentally-friendly" national agriculture. After graduating from college, John worked for a year at Isidore Foods, a local organic food business.

Outside of ALT, you might find John working on the weekends at the Children's Museum of Pittsburgh or enjoying Pittsburgh's outdoors!

**MARAH VECENIE** loves her camera, and even more the beautiful brown and pink floral neck strap that she has to prevent it from hitting the ground. A North Hills native who is pursuing a degree in Geography and Environmental Studies from Slippery Rock University, Marah spends her free time taking photos of ALT properties. She also spends time in the office organizing ALT's photo archive and identifying which properties do not have many images. She then takes on the challenge of photographing that iconic image for the protected green space. A cheerful addition to the ALT workplace, Marah has provided us with several picture books that we can show during ALT presentations.

*The photo in the background is one of Marah's photos.*

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Thank you!



## GreenTalk with Eagle Scout Chris Miller

### 1. How or what has your Boy Scout troop taught you about the outdoors and nature?

Much of what I know about nature has been taught to me through Scouting. The Outdoor Motto can be summed up with three words: **Leave No Trace**. Every time I have gone with the Scouts somewhere, we have left the area in a better condition than how we found it. If people want to continue to enjoy nature, this must be the mindset of those who really want to help.

### 2. How did you learn about Allegheny Land Trust and Lowries Run Slopes?

Someone handed me a flyer for an upcoming hike at Lowries Run Slopes, and the rest is history.

### 3. What is your favorite thing about Lowries Run Slopes?

The seclusion of the trail. The majority of the trail sits within one hundred yards of the main road, yet no sound of the traffic ever reaches the trail. The trail allows for a calming observation of the diversity in the area, while still remaining close to civilization.



PHOTO BY EMILIE COOPER

### 4. What made you want to work at Lowries Run Slopes for your Eagle Scout Project?

The diversity of the trail. Despite the trail's condition, I could see its potential, and realized that others would have trouble enjoying the area unless something was done. The

# GREENTALK

project's goal became improving access to LRS so that others could see the diversity of the trail as I had.

### 5. What was the most difficult part of constructing a trail on LRS?

Laying the posts. I had not noticed it, but the trail sits on a layer of shale about six inches beneath the earth's surface. The post hole digger I had could not penetrate the three feet I needed to lay the posts, and after two holes were finally dug, ten more still remained. I changed tactics, and instead relied on blazes to mark the trail while leaving the installed posts as fixtures to the trail.

### 6. How can other Scouts and young people get involved with conservation?

All people have to do is show interest. Hiking a trail with a garbage bag for litter or raising awareness through fliers are both ways to help conservation. The misconception is that large projects which impact thousands are the only way to get involved. The truth is much simpler: **every person counts, every person can make a difference.**

#### From "Stewardship", page 1

We have many dedicated volunteers who take it upon themselves to act; for these individuals I am extremely grateful. Recently volunteers have installed interpretive signs, completed annual monitoring reports, recorded bird species lists, removed invasive species, mowed our open fields and initiated many more activities even without an organized event. These supporters offer their knowledge, time and dedication to help make visiting ALT properties a more enjoyable experience for everyone.

ALT offers guidance and support for those of you who would like to steward your own piece of land. We can educate you on invasive species identification, how to properly prune a tree and help locate specific supplies or tools for a special project.

To get involved in Stewardship, check out VISTAS, E-News and our website for organized events or contact me at [ecooper@alleghenylandtrust.org](mailto:ecooper@alleghenylandtrust.org) to steward a piece of property on your own time. I look forward to seeing you all in ACTION next season!

## April Boat Cruise



PHOTO BY BOB PURDY

As Board Member Jack Ubinger said, "It was a dark and stormy night..." That didn't keep more than 40 ALT supporters from enjoying an evening cruise and some beautiful city vistas at twilight. Proceeds from the event benefit ALT's conservation work. Thanks to everyone who attended!



# ALT Stewards

**W**e are busy and want to share some of the exciting activities taking place on ALT properties. We encourage everyone to help out, whether you can work the registration table or plant trees, we need your help to make our events successful. Check our website for regular updates on upcoming events and always look for reminders on E-News. If we don't have your e-mail, please send it to [admin@alleghenylandtrust.org](mailto:admin@alleghenylandtrust.org) or visit [alleghenylandtrust.org](http://alleghenylandtrust.org) and click on "sign up for our newsletter".

## Audubon Greenway INVASIVE PULLING

Invasive species are of concern on most conservation lands and Audubon Greenway is no exception. This June we were lucky to have the 2011 Pittsburgh Allies to help us tackle one of these invasives, Oriental Bittersweet. The group removed vines that were hurting quality trees in the forest. We look forward to working with Allies again next year.



## Wingfield Pines

### PURPLE LOOSESTRIPE PULL

This attractive yet invasive plant prevents the growth of valuable native species that feed local song birds. Volunteers help remove the flowers so the plant does not produce more seed, in turn producing more plants. This event happens every summer so be sure to look next July for a Purple Loosestrife Pull at Wingfield Pines.



# Ship Activities

## Irwin Run

### URBAN ECOSTEWARDS AT WORK

Are you interested in stewarding a piece of conservation land? If so, join the Urban EcoSteward (UES) Program at ALT. We have several stewards for Irwin Run, caring for their own little plot of land, giving it the attention it needs, with the assistance of ALT stewardship. This year UES volunteers have helped install new signs, removed invasive shrubs and enjoyed a good hot dog cookout at Irwin Run.



## Sycamore Island

### TRAIL WORK AND INVASIVE SPECIES MANAGEMENT

If you remember... it really rained this spring making it hard to work on the island, but ALT volunteers have been busy since it dried up building a trail on the island and monitoring the Japanese Knotweed (invasive plant) infestation. Get involved with a Sycamore Island Task Force and focus on wildlife, plants, invasives, or education and outreach.

## Dead Man's Hollow

### SIGN DEDICATION AND TRAIL CLEAN UP

Dead Man's Hollow, ALT's largest conservation area at 440 acres is much easier to explore now that new trail signs were installed.

Volunteers helped to repair the broken information kiosk, install a new trail sign, fix broken benches and pick up litter. It was a fun filled day and everyone enjoyed themselves. There is still more to do at DMH, so check out the website in the spring for similar events.



PHOTOS BY EMILIE COOPER

MAP BY JESSICA STEWART



## ALT Partners with USC Community to Protect Land on Chartiers Creek

by Rhonda Madden, Director of Development

Once again Allegheny Land Trust is partnering with The Upper St. Clair Citizens for Land Stewardship (CLS) to protect land in Upper St. Clair. Through a private donation of approximately 12 acres of land, ALT has the opportunity to extend the greenway along Chartiers Creek. "Our partnership with CLS is a great example of the tremendous impact a small group of citizens can have on protecting the natural assets of their community," says ALT Executive Director Roy Kraynyk.

While the property is being donated, ALT must also raise \$10,000 for the long-term maintenance and stewardship fund. A group of ALT Board members is providing a *matching challenge grant of up to \$5,000* to encourage community support to meet this goal! ALT has a deadline of September 23 to secure stewardship funds that will make it possible to accept the gift of property.

The property on both sides of Chartiers Creek is predominantly young forest. ALT is primarily interested in this parcel because of the stream frontage on Chartiers Creek and the forested floodplain habitat. This land serves as an overflow area at times of high water and as a riparian buffer that helps filter runoff into Chartiers Creek.

To make a contribution please return the enclosed envelope before September 23 and

write Chartiers Project on the memo line of your check payable to Allegheny Land Trust. If you would like to make a gift using ALT's secure website, please visit [alleghenylantrust.org](http://alleghenylantrust.org) or call the ALT office at 412-741-2750. Please support the Chartiers Creek project by making a contribution and returning the enclosed reply envelope before September 23.

Thank you!



### "The Refuge Reach?" "The Steward Ship?"

Volunteers will soon be able to use this boat to get back and forth from Sycamore Island—but not before it has a name! We encourage you to come up with your own creative names for our boat. Visit [alleghenylantrust.org](http://alleghenylantrust.org) or

send your entry to [admin@alleghenylantrust.org](mailto:admin@alleghenylantrust.org) and the winner will receive a free Allegheny Land Trust hat!

ALT's conservation work on Sycamore Island is made possible by the generous support of the Colcom Foundation.



### Farmland Preservation: Application Deadline

Allegheny Land Trust is administering Allegheny County's Farmland Preservation Program. To date, this program has provided funding for agricultural conservation easements on 20 farms equaling more than 2,100 acres!

Applications are currently being accepted to the program until October 1, 2011.

For more information about the program and to apply, contact:

Jessica Stewart  
Program Administrator  
[jstewart@alleghenylantrust.org](mailto:jstewart@alleghenylantrust.org)

WHAT IS THIS?: This lacy beauty is deceiving, a native shrub known as Arrowwood (seen in this photo at our Audubon Greenway Conservation Area) is struggling to stay alive in our forests. Do you know what causes this?

ANSWER: The Viburnum Leaf Beetle feeds on the leaves of plants in the genus Viburnum. This invasive beetle could have a serious negative impact on song birds. The beetle continually defoliates the shrub, preventing it from producing fruit, a major source of forage for song birds.

## Land Trust Receives Governor's Award for Environmental Excellence

In April, Allegheny Land Trust received one of the 2011 Governor's Environmental Excellence Awards for their accomplishment in local land conservation and community revitalization. ALT was nominated for the award by the Pennsylvania Environmental Council (PEC). Awarded each year by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, the Governor's Awards highlight the best practices in environmental innovation throughout the state. The award was bestowed on ALT because of their work to expand Emerald View Park on Mt. Washington.



**Left to right: Paul King, President and CEO, PEC; Ilyssa Manspeizer, Director, Park Development & Conservation, MWDC; Roy Kraynyk, Executive Director, ALT; Michael Krancer, Secretary, DEP**

"The Emerald View Park project is an illustration of ALT's proven approach of getting communities involved in local land conservation and empowering local citizens to shape the future of their neighborhood," says Paul M. King, President and CEO of PEC. In partnership with Mt. Washington Community Development Corporation (MWDC), Allegheny Land Trust raised over \$410,000 for land conservation with public state funds being leveraged nearly 2:1 by private foundations and individuals.

Long-term stewardship of protected land is being provided in partnership with the City of Pittsburgh and the MWDC which is organizing community volunteers.

### **"From the Executive Director", continued from page 1**

across the smooth surface of the pond catching a flicker of sunlight or causing a floating leaf to move enough to scare a resting dragonfly away. Each pebble seemed to enhance the momentum of the previous one. Then my last throw was usually a whole handful of pebbles which created a dance of ripples and little waves pushing that leaf faster and further.

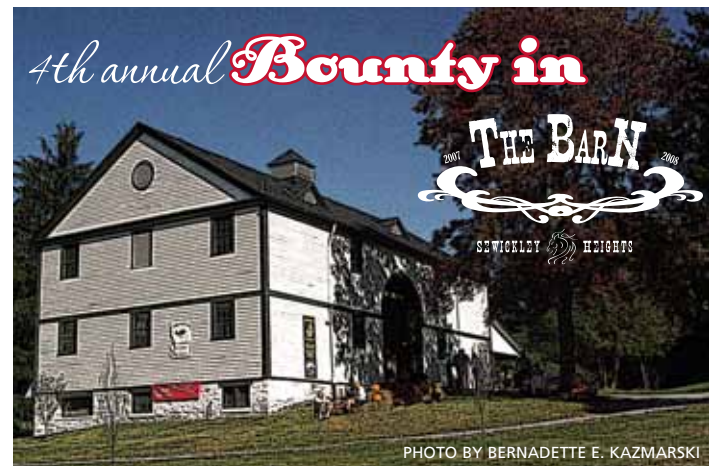
I liken ALT's community-based conservation work to tossing pebbles in a pond. Each individual that we engage in a land protection or stewardship project is like another person throwing pebbles that contribute to the wave we are building for land conservation. The more people tossing pebbles the bigger the wave, and the bigger the wave the more influence we have on funding and local zoning to protect mature woodlands, steep slopes and watersheds.

Each wave also represents the influence each of us has on our friends, family and community. As a supporter of ALT and local land protection there is no better champion than you. So I encourage you to become more active in conservation and help us accelerate land protection by introducing someone to ALT, our website or better yet take someone to an ALT conservation area near your neighborhood. And, if you happen to select Wingfield Pines I invite you to throw a pebble in a pond and closely observe its sphere of influence.

Most importantly while you are there look around to enjoy the whole dynamic landscape. Feel the sense of satisfaction and appreciate the fact that your past support of ALT is what helped to make the experience you are having today possible. Your dollar was like that pebble in that it

influenced the future of that property. Were it not for the support of our members Wingfield Pines and our other conservation areas would not be permanent green space today. Thank you!

*RK, Executive Stone Skipper*



**OCTOBER 1, 2011, 6:30–10:30 p.m.**

Music by the NewLanders

**SAVE THE DATE OCTOBER 1 2011**

Make your reservations early online at [alleghenylandtrust.org](http://alleghenylandtrust.org) or call 412-741-2750.





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# VISTAS

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### BRUEGGERS DAY — SEPTEMBER 17

The Sewickley Brueggers will give a percentage of the proceeds that day to ALT.

### SITE STEWARD PICNIC — SEPTEMBER 25

(Contact Emilie Cooper for reservations.)

### BOUNTY IN THE BARN — OCTOBER 1

(See details on page 7.)

### MATCH DAY 2011 — OCTOBER 4

This is a unique opportunity to have your gift to ALT matched.

### S'MORES ON SYCAMORE — OCTOBER 15

4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Must provide own kayak/canoe.

Join archeological historian Christine Davis for a tour of the island.

**Don't miss a thing! Sign up for our E-News—send your e-mail to [admin@alleghenylandtrust.org](mailto:admin@alleghenylandtrust.org).**

## What will be your legacy?

*You can make sure that future generations will be able to enjoy the same views and conservation benefits by helping to protect the land we cherish.*

*Learn more about ALT's Legacy Society and making a gift that costs nothing during your lifetime, with possible tax benefits:*

- Adding Allegheny Land Trust as a beneficiary in your will;
- Making Allegheny Land Trust a beneficiary of your IRA or retirement fund;
- Naming Allegheny Land Trust as a beneficiary of an insurance policy.

*Please visit [www.alleghenylandtrust.org](http://www.alleghenylandtrust.org) and click How to Help/Gift Planning or call us at 412-741-2750.*



Hikers at Irwin Run.



## ALT is on Facebook!

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