



Volume 31
Issue 1



Winter
2022

Things to do in 2022!

Saturday, January 1: First Day Hike at Morosini First Day of a New Year! The hike will begin at the upper parking area at the Morosini Reserve promptly at **1PM**, so come a few minutes early, and **earlier** if you park at Lot #1 at the bend. We'll walk down to the pond and see what the weather will allow hike-wise. It's great to get out in ALL of the seasons! Our events are always free; PLEASE register on our website or call 724-325-5523 so that we can plan accordingly.



Saturday, January 15: Winter Weeds Walk Join our Lindsey Praksti at Morosini Reserve Parking Lot #1 on the left side of Morosini Farm Road after passing under the RR trestle for a walk around the Morosini Reserve identifying "weeds" in winter. The walk will begin PROMPTLY at **10am**, so try to arrive 10 minutes early. We'll put your knowledge to the test! Which do birds appreciate and what plants provide food and shelter for local wildlife? And what is edible this time of year? Our events are always free; PLEASE register on our website or call 724-325-5523

Friday, January 21: Owl Prowl Come out for a moonlight stroll and listen for the owls! We will be heading out from the Universal Pedestrian Trailhead at the end of Morosini Farm Road promptly at **8PM**, so arrive ahead of time. (The last stop of the walk will be near lot #1 at the bend, so you'll want to park there and walk up the road to the Upper Trailhead). The house at the right is NOT part of the Reserve. Our events are always free; PLEASE register on our website or call 724-325-5523



Saturday, February 19: Apple Tree Rehab at Morosini Our annual project is revitalizing the old apple trees at Morosini! We have seen these trees bloom and produce the very same year! This is year four of our quest to not only revitalize the old variety trees at the reserve, but to make others more comfortable with the process before trying at home! Be at parking lot #1 by **9:30AM**. PLEASE register on our website or call 724-325-5523

Bring your work gloves, loppers, clippers, pole saws, and questions so that our team can share their experience.

Sunday, March 20: 1st Day of Spring Hike at the King Reserve Spring promises new leaves and fresh beginnings. We'll be checking out the buds and fronds along the King Reserve trails. Meet at the Crowfoot Road parking lot before 1PM, and PLEASE register on our website or call 724-325-5523 .



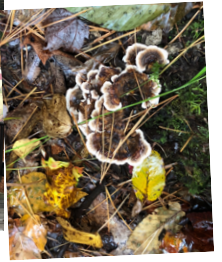
Saturday, April 23: Earth Day at the Flinn Reserve The Boxcartown Road parking lot will again serve as our Earth Day "Ground Zero". Last year's Earth Day haul featured some 40 tires and dozens of bags of trash. We'll get together at the parking lot and break into teams to not only pick up trash, but to improve pollinator habitat by removing more non-native invasive plants and doing some strategic plantings. Remember to register! We have community service hours available for students, too!

Wednesday, April 27: Annual Members Meeting & Elections Delmont Library, 7pm

2021 Fourth Quarter Activities



30th Anniversary Celebration
10/02/2021



Spruce Flat Bog & Wolf Rocks
Autumn Excursion 10/09



10/16 Autumn
Enchanted Forest



OptOutside at
the McGinnis Reserve 11/26



Hot Chocolate Walk 12/11
w/Murrysville Recreation



Westmoreland Conservancy Reserves are privately owned lands that are open to the public. **PLEASE** observe **Leave No Trace** sensibilities and **take out anything you take in**. Do **NOT** leave trash at the reserves.



Winter Solstice Walk 12/21/2021

“Go to the winter woods: Listen there, look,
watch, and the 'dead months' will give you
a subtler secret than any you have yet found in the forest”
-Fiona Macleod-

The new year is here, and winter is showing itself in full force. The temperatures have plummeted, and the snowflakes have been falling fast, the world outside looks like the inside of a child's snow-globe, pristine and picturesque in its winter cloak. This is the time of year when curling up to a hot cup of tea and a good book seems like the most logical way to pass the time. But as much as I love books, I have found that they can only hold my attention so long before I get antsy and need to shake the winter doldrums. For that there is no better remedy than a walk in the cold; ambling and stumbling through the snows amongst the fields and forests that lie in wait for spring. At first it may seem as if there is little to see outside in winter besides gray skies and snow, but if you slow down and look closer you will discover that the herbs and flowers that existed so boldly in the warmer months are waiting to show themselves, out amongst the cold winds and falling snows.

Winter is a wonderful season to identify plants, a time when the above ground world is asleep, and the green energy of life is now deep underground in a dormant slumber. Winter identification gives you the chance to know a plant in yet another phase of its life cycle. It is a useful way to locate wild edibles for spring harvesting, and a necessary skill for root harvesting in autumn when the plants have changed their forms.

Some plants such as milkweed are easy to identify after they have gone to seed, but others like Sweet Cecily are not quite so easy to figure out. Luckily there is a book available to help you with the tricky ones. Lauren Browns “Weeds in Winter” is a must for winter plant excursions, its detailed drawings provide an excellent visual reference. It also contains a wonderful key to help identify many of the winter plants are found in Pennsylvania.

Snow covered fields are full of many wonderful medicinal and edible plants, which makes them a perfect place to start any snowy hike. In the late months of summer and autumn, the fields and meadows of Pennsylvania are a bouquet of color and variety, but by October they have lost their luster, becoming an expanse of dull grays and brown.



Milkweed, the once choice food of the monarch butterfly has become a shell of its once grand self, only the cotton-like seeds remain, clinging to the husk of autumn's pod, waiting for a cold breeze to spread them on the wind. Goldenrod, gray with age is now the stately elder of the field. Its seed tops sway in the breeze remembering the August days when its golden crown stretched across the meadow as far as the eye could see. With the arrival of cold days the white umbels of Yarrow have turned a darkened gray and its once fragrant leaves, full of wound healing medicine are now clinging to the stem, shriveled and odorless.



Nearly every field and meadow contain the skeletal remains of Queen Anne's Lace, its birds' nest-like top catches snowflakes as they fall. The Queens' seeds have been pillaged by migrating birds to be spread far and wide across the land. Mints still holding their faint aromas call back to the days of summer past, their square stems and opposite leaves provide instant family identification even in winter. Asters of every size shape and variety can be found in fields all winter, though identifying exactly which particular species you're looking at can be hard, as many of them have very similar characteristics.

Traveling from the meadow to the fields edge, you will inevitably find you have picked up a hitchhiker or two. The seed-containing burrs of Burdock love to latch on like Velcro to any passing human or animal. They make a tangled mess of gloves and scarves and are especially hard to get out of hair and fur. The taproots of young Burdock plants remain deep underground all winter, each one waiting for their second and final year of life when they grow from a hand full of basal leaves into five-foot-tall giants.

Mullein, a plant who truly loves edges and disturbed spaces often stands stark against the crisp blue sky of winter. An unlit torch made of tiny flowers, waiting for the spark and flame of summer to ignite its yellow brilliance. If you are lucky, you may still find the glowing sun colored head of a Dandelion poking through the snow. They've been known to blossom and bloom every month of the year. The early spring leaves of Dandelion are a great addition to any salad, and the bitter roots help aid in detoxification and digestion. All along the field edge you will find the thorny stems of many different berry bushes. Pennsylvania is home to many members of the Rubus genus, Blackberry, red raspberry, wine berry and (my favorite) black raspberry are all very common and very delicious. Come back in the spring and you are sure to find enough berries for a pie or jam.



Next, step beneath the trees into the quiet woods where in a few months' time the early spring wildflowers will soon begin to show themselves. All around the forest floor lies the remains of the once growing world. Bare stalks, fallen leaves and dried up flower heads mark the spots where herbs and flowers once thrived beneath the forest canopy.

Rose bushes can be found throughout the forests of Pennsylvania in every season. After blooming their flowers morph into the burning red fruit of rose hips. Rose hips are a winter treat full of vitamin C, waiting to be added to your next pot of tea. Fallen hickory and walnuts, though more abundant in the autumn can still be found in winter. Sometimes it takes cracking a few open with a rock to find one that has not been nibbled on by forest creatures.



As you walk the forest paths you will likely come upon Hawthorn, a thorny tree once planted as a living hedgerow that has spread far and wide. The vibrant red berries of hawthorn make great food for the migrating birds of autumn. But by the time the cold sets in all that remains is a few shriveled dull red remnants. Garlic Mustard in its many forms can be found year-round though in winter it is most often a small patch of rounded green leaves that exude a pungent garlic smell when crushed. The young leaves can be added to salads or stir fry or eaten as a trail snack as you walk. Onion Grass appears when the cold weather sets in, a green rounded grass sticking out amongst the white snow. The bulbs beneath the ground can be dug up and eaten, while the tops can be cut up like chives. These are just a taste of the many plants that can be found from field to forest to your own backyard all winter long.

So, when the snowflakes start to fall and the gray days of winter take hold, get outside, take to the woods, go find a field. Get out of the house and explore the season. You will discover there is far more out there to see than you ever imagined. ~Lindsey Praksti

*Lindsey is a certified herbalist, Master Naturalist, and fascinating hike leader. In fact, we prefer to call her hikes "grazes", as we sample Nature's forgotten bounty along the trails! ~ST

Winter Walk Tuesdays: Something New in 2022!

Join Lindsey for a winter walk at the Reserves on the fourth Tuesday in January, February, and March. These are afternoon walks, given that the sun sets by 5PM. PLEASE register on our website, or call 724-325-5523

January 25, Tomer Reserve, Twin Oaks Drive N., 3:30PM

February 22, King Reserve south trail, Crowfoot Road, 3:30PM

March 22, McGinnis Reserve, Hunter Drive, 3:30PM



Earth Day at the Flinn Reserve April 23

Celebrate the 52nd Earth Day with us at the Flinn Reserve! We've accomplished a tremendous amount of work in this area and are looking forward to doing so much more!

We'll be removing some accumulated trash along Boxcartown Road, and really want to make more headway against the non-native growth in the area. Privet, Oriental Bittersweet, Amur Honeysuckle, Barberry, Burning Bush, Japanese Knotweed, Multiflora Rose.... all need to go so that we can restore with native plantings. All we need is **YOU!!**

The parking area on Boxcartown Road will serve as our 9AM meeting place and the teams will head out to the project areas from there. Please bring work gloves, loppers, hand clippers, and remember to wear protective clothing and sturdy footwear.

Register through our Facebook event page, on our website, or call 724-325-5523.

Annual Member's Meeting & Elections April 27

Westmoreland Conservancy's Annual Members' Meeting and Elections are scheduled for Wednesday, April 27th, 2022. The meeting will be held in the Delmont Public Library and on Zoom. Should you choose to attend via Zoom, please send an email to contact@westmorelandconservancy.org so that we can send you the link.

The Members' Meeting will open at 7pm with a review of the proposed slate for the election of our Board of Governors. This election is by our general membership, so please plan to attend.

Your voice is important to us. At the close of the Members Meeting, the Organizational Meeting will commence with the Board members electing the 2022 officers. The April Board meeting will then come to order.



www.westmorelandconservancy.org

2021-22 Officers

Shelly Tichy – President
Rob Malley – Vice President
Bob Sloboda – Secretary/Steward Coord.
Joann Reisch – Treasurer

2021-22 Board of Governors

Alan Halperin - Board
Rob Bowman-Board
Chip Brown – Steward Coordinator
Nick Rose – Student Board Member

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Murrysville, PA 15668
contact@westmorelandconservancy.org



Our Vision

To preserve natural, rural, and historic landscapes for Nature's benefit and the enrichment of future generations.

Our Mission

Westmoreland Conservancy preserves, enhances, and connects land, habitat, and green space through acquisition, stewardship, and cooperation with local communities and other organizations.

Schedule of Events

****Watch our Facebook page or sign up for email reminders for work days!** Please wear sturdy shoes, leg protection and weather-appropriate attire. Scheduled Events may be canceled in case of Extreme Weather.**

- 01/01: **1PM** First Day Hike, Morosini Reserve Upper Lot
- 01/15: **10AM** Winter Weeds Walk, Morosini Reserve Parking Lot #1
- 01/21: **8PM** Owl Prowl, Morosini Reserve Lot #1
- 01/26: **7PM** Monthly Meeting, Delmont Public Library
- 02/19: **9AM** Apple Tree Rehab, Morosini Reserve, Lot #1
- 02/23: **7PM** Monthly Meeting, Delmont Public Library
- 03/20: **1PM** First Day of Spring Hike, King Reserve, Crowfoot Road
- 03/23: **7PM** Monthly Meeting, Delmont Public Library
- 04/24: **9AM** Earth Day at the Flinn Reserve, Boxcartown Road
- 04/28: **7PM** Annual Members Meeting, Elections & Monthly Meeting, Delmont Public Library