

Wissahickon Nature Club

GUEST SPEAKER

NOVEMBER 7, THURSDAY, 7:30 P.M. THE NATURE OF ALLEGHENY ISLANDS, BY JESSICA ROHRDANZ, ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION SPECIALIST AT POINT STATE PARK. LEARN ABOUT ALLEGHENY ISLANDS STATE PARK, INCLUDING HOW THE ISLANDS IN THE PARK FORMED AND WHAT SORT OF FLORA AND FAUNA CAN BE FOUND ON THEM NOW. THE ISLANDS ARE UNDEVELOPED AND CAN ONLY BE ACCESSED BY BOAT. THEY ACT AS A REFUGE FOR WILDLIFE, PARTICULARLY BIRDS AND WATERFOWL.

[HTTP://WWW.DCNR.STATE.PA.US/STATEPARKS/FINDAPARK/ALLEGHENYISLANDS/INDEX.HTM](http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/stateparks/findapark/allegHENYISLANDS/index.htm)



Allegheny Islands State Park by Jessica Rohrdanz

DON'T MISS OUR NEXT MEETING. NOVEMBER 21, THURSDAY, 7:30 P.M. TOP-10 MOST LIFE-FRIENDLY PLACES IN THE SOLAR SYSTEM, BY LUKE GRUBER. MAYBE LIFE IS ALL ALONE ON EARTH - - - BUT IF IT'S NOT, HERE ARE THE MOST LIKELY PLACES IN OUR SOLAR SYSTEM TO FIND IT.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

TREASURER'S REPORT
ACCORDING TO TREASURER
DIANNE MACHESNEY:
PREVIOUS BALANCE: \$745.15
NO ACTIVITY
CURRENT BALANCE: \$745.15

ANNUAL DUES ARE DUE IN
SEPTEMBER
INDIVIDUAL \$7.00
FAMILY \$10.00

EXHIBIT
THANK YOU **DELIA WHITE** FOR
PRESENTING WISSAHICKON
CREEK AT OUR LAST MEETING.

WORTH REPEATING
THE WOODS WERE MADE
FOR THE HUNTERS OF
DREAMS,
THE BROOKS FOR THE
FISHERS OF SONG;
TO THE HUNTERS WHO
HUNT FOR THE GUNLESS
GAME
THE STREAMS AND THE
WOODS BELONG.

SAM WALTER FOSS

Welcome to the Dark Side A phenology for Early November

Chuck Tague

Halloween began with *Samhain*, the ancient Celtic celebration of the mid point of autumn. On this night, All Hallows' Eve, the boundaries between the worlds of the living and the dead are obscured. All sorts of unholy beings roam the earth and commit mischief on homes, crops and livestock. With Halloween the dark season begins.

Indeed we are entering the season of darkness. From now until winter's mid point, approximately Groundhog Day,

night dominates the days. During the dark season the sun comes late, sets early and travels close to the horizon. The days are cold, frosty, frozen. The morning condensation takes long to dissipate or melt. Green, the color of life, succumbs to browns. Signs of life are scarce. Hazy, dismal skies are without joy or hope.

Animals neither grow nor reproduce. Instead they struggle to survive another day. Many do not. It is the imperative of the northern hemisphere that no plant nor animal can ignore. Prepare for the dark season -- or perish.

We are fortunate to live in a time and a place where we can step back from nature and observe the dark season.



Great Horned Owl by Chuck Tague

Botanical Society of Western Pennsylvania

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Meeting

November 11, Monday, 7:15 p.m.
Cyperaceae of Southern Assam with Ethnomedicinal and Economical Uses, by Himani Pal. The Cyperaceae are a large family of monocots known as sedges. Assam is a northeastern state of India in one of the richest biodiversity zones in the world. Ms.Pal holds a B.S., M.S. and M. Phil. in Life Science (Botany) from Assam University, India.

Three Rivers Birding Club

Jim Valimont, President
412.828.5338
www.3rbc.org

November 17, Sunday, 8:00 a.m. **Moraine State Park** day use area (south shore) in the first parking lot on the right. Leaderless. Meeting

December 4, Wednesday, 6:30 p.m.
Digital Slide Slam, when members show us their favorite new images. This meeting has moved to **Botany Hall**, adjacent to Phipps Conservatory, across from Schenley Park Cafe and Visitor Center. The street is Panther Hollow Drive.

Environmental Book Club

Kim Metheny kmetheny@hotmail.com
Chriss O'Lare colare@comcast.net
Meet at the Panera on McKnight Road.

Upcoming Book

November 18, Monday, 7:30 p.m. **Darwin's Ghosts: The Secret History of Evolution** by Rebecca Stott.

Welcome to the Dark Side (cont.)

Explore the sudden openness of the forest. Look for bird and squirrel nests, cocoons, the latest, hardiest wildflowers. Take in the fragrances of autumn; hickory smoke, burning leaves, fermenting fruit, sweet decaying ferns. Crack open a hickory nut. Watch the last reds of the oak leaves dissipate into the autumn gray. Rustle your feet through the fallen leaves as you walk across a forest floor the color of an Irish Setter. Dance along to the rhythm of the crunchy ground. Listen to distant sounds on crisp evening walks. With luck you'll hear an owl hoot or whinny.

Drink some cider. Bake a pie. Don't let the dark season get to your soul.

Anticipate Indian summer, a period of mild, clear weather that occurs after the leaves have fallen and frost has killed off all the non-woody plants, but don't wait. Get out now. Too soon the comforts and pleasures of fall will be winter memories.

Feel the cold. Draw pictures on a frosted window. Watch silky milkweed parachutes drift on a breeze.

As the dark season moves steadily down from the frigid north, waterfowl move south. Listen for the braying of Tundra Swans as they pass overhead. Expect the swans after a cold front during the first or second week of November.

Look for stray Snow Geese mixed in flocks of Canada Geese, especially around Pymatuning. These migrants from Arctic Canada are unusual in western Pennsylvania, but common east of the Allegheny Front. They have two color forms; the Snow Goose, all white with black primaries and the Blue Goose, a gray bird with a white neck and head. Rarely a Ross' Goose, a smaller version of the Snow Goose, will turn up in western Pennsylvania. It's a good time to visit Presque Isle, Pymatuning, Yellow Creek and Lake Arthur. The highland lakes around Laurel and Chestnut Ridges are also excellent places to observe waterfowl and other water birds. Don't forget Pittsburgh's three rivers.

Moraine State Park is a great place to look for Common Loons. Other water birds that pass through the region early in November are Red-throated Loons,

Double-crested Cormorants and Horned Grebes. American Bitterns may be lurking in swamps and marshes.

Hawk migration continues. Look for lingering Golden Eagles, Northern Goshawks and a stream of Red-tails riding the north winds. Will this be a good year for Rough-legged Hawks? Check Pymatuning and strip mines for these tundra breeders.

Hummingbirds in November? Keep your feeders up and your hummingbird flowers blooming as long as you can. In late autumn Rufous Hummingbirds and other western strays show up in eastern North America.

Songbirds are still migrating. Expect Fox Sparrows, Yellow-rumped Warblers, both species of kinglets, Winter Wrens, Rusty Blackbirds and Brown Creepers. Look for individual songbirds that hang around when others of their species have gone south. You might find Gray Catbirds, Blue-headed Vireo, Eastern Phoebe or Tree Swallow. Some Hermit Thrushes hang around for the Christmas Bird Counts.

The first Short-eared Owls usually arrive in time for Halloween. Some years large winter roosts of Short-ears and Northern Harriers gather in open fields. Check grassy areas for runways and tunnels through clumps of grass. There's a correlation between Meadow Vole populations and the number of winter raptors.

Keep an eye out for migrating Red Bats and Hoary Bats. Sightings of fox and coyote increase as the landscape opens.

We may still observe sulphurs, whites and Mourning Cloaks. After dark winter moths visit of Witch Hazel. Look for Chinese Mantids, and as the leaves drop from the goldenrods in old fields, look for their egg cases on stems.

Which are the toughest wildflowers? Keep a list of flowers that boom in November; Queen Anne's Lace, dandelion, Creeping Wood Sorrel, Common Evening Primrose, Common Groundsel, Canada Thistle, several aster species, Witch Hazel and Winter Cress. Some asters continue well after the frost. Will any flowers make it to December?

Fear not the dark season. Accept its challenge; embrace its pleasures. Fight the depression that comes from gloomy days and endless nights.

Me? I've learned from the birds. I go south with the ducks, grebes and cormorants. I will publish my next phenological update in mid November, from the coast of central Florida.

Thursday, October 28, 2010