



# The Friends

VOL XIII ISSUE 1

SPRING/ SUMMER 2021

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

WALK ON THE WILD SIDE..... 1

FRIENDS UPDATE AND PLANS .... 3

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### MONTHLY TRAIL WORK

Resuming May 1

### FRIENDS ANNUAL PICNIC

To be announced

### FRIENDS PHOTO CONTEST

To be announced

### FRIENDS OF RIDLEY CREEK STATE PARK NEWSLETTER

Editor..... Joan Nikelsky

Design.....Mark Dougherty

## Take a Walk on the Wild Side

by Friends member Lauren Bacigalupi

There are so many things to love about Ridley Creek State Park, it's hard to pick a favorite. But this time of year, especially, the wildlife takes center stage as the park begins to come to life with the arrival of warmer weather. We met up with Park Naturalist, Gary Stolz, to talk about some of the lovely creatures creating the sounds and sights throughout the park they call home.



*Spring Peeper* - Image credit Jeff Hankey  
from [https://www.paherps.com/herps/frogs-toads/northern\\_spring\\_peeper/](https://www.paherps.com/herps/frogs-toads/northern_spring_peeper/)

Did you know that once the snow melts, the wood frogs and spring peepers come out? If you're taking a walk, they're the ones making all the noise! Wood frogs are true frogs, according to Gary, and are tan with a dark eye mask and they sound like quacking ducks, while the peepers are in the "chorus frog" group (related to tree frogs) and they're tiny with an X on their back. You

probably won't see these guys - they usually hide under wet grasses and leaves - but you can definitely hear them and you may catch a glimpse when they come out to lay their eggs. You know that PEEP- PEEP-PEEP sound you hear walking through the woods...that's the spring peepers chatting away! And by the way, all those eggs they lay - they become frogs around mid-summer that feast on biting insects... Thank you!

In addition to all our frog friends, including the pickerel frogs and American toads, our park is an awesome spot for migratory birds. In fact, there are close to 200 species of birds that are native to our park - some are residents, some are winter visitors and some migrate through. Either way, it's spectacular. Gary started naming so many birds, I could hardly keep up, but we have early pine, palm, and yellow-rumped warblers - eastern phoebes - tree, barn, and northern rough-winged swallows - Louisiana waterthrush - just to name a few.

*continued page 2*

Ridley Creek State Park provides the perfect place where they can rest and get the nourishment they need - especially the ones moving on! In fact, our park is such a great place for migratory birds that the National Audubon Society designated RCSP as an IBA. What's that you ask? "Important Bird Area" for nesting and migrating birds. So that's pretty cool, don't you think?!

Birds of prey also call RCSP home and in fact, many nest here. The black vultures have their nests in the barns on the property. You can also see bald eagles, red-shouldered hawks, barred owls and many more.



*Red-shouldered Hawk (juvenile)- Image credit Mark Dougherty*

Of course, we also have our white-tailed deer, fox, groundhogs, gray squirrels, red squirrels (they're smaller), raccoons, cottontail rabbits, skunks, and opossums (mighty tick eaters...thank you!) but we also have beavers, weasels, and American minks!

At the park, the team has made an effort to create outdoor learning spaces and classes where visitors can hear about all the creatures that live there and their importance in our life cycle. The trailside vernal pool and the butterfly garden are two such spaces. At the vernal pool you can learn about frogs, emergent vegetation, and what

they need to thrive, while at the butterfly garden, you can learn about pollinators, butterflies, hummingbirds, native bees and plants that bring us the foods and medicines we need, and so much more.

Nature classes are free, and to find one you can check out the relevant postings on the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources' website at this link: <https://events.dcnr.pa.gov/search?search=ridley+creek>. Here's a page that has education events as well: [https://events.dcnr.pa.gov/ridley\\_creek\\_state\\_park#.YG3d9OhKhHE](https://events.dcnr.pa.gov/ridley_creek_state_park#.YG3d9OhKhHE). Finally, you can also look at the information boards around the park - Gary makes sure they are posted. And it's not only classes, there are nature hikes and nature walks you can do as well.

Gary had so much information to share, his passion for our park and everything living in it just bubbled out of him. He has been an advocate, learner, and educator for all things in nature his whole life. He knows that if the frogs, toads, butterflies, insects, and birds are doing well, our environment is doing well and in turn, so are we- it's all connected. One of the best things he said to me was "it doesn't matter if you can name all the species in the park - it's just important that you care about them and understand how things fit together." And caring about them means being respectful of where they live, staying on the trails, leaving no trace, treading lightly and simply soaking in the sounds, smells, and sights of all the beauty around you. Paints a beautiful picture, doesn't it?

Thank you, Gary, for watching over all our forest friends and helping to keep RCSP a sanctuary for them. If you want more information on Leave no Trace and what that means, let us know!

And next time you're at the park, be quiet and listen: What do you hear? What do you see? There's a whole wonderful world out there among the trees.

### **MICROPLASTICS IN RIDLEY CREEK**

PennEnvironment conducted research on the presence of microplastics in the waterways of Pennsylvania and found that all the samples they collected contained microplastics, including in the creek at Ridley. To read the full article, click on <https://pennenvironment.org/reports/pac/microplastics-pennsylvania>.



# Friends of Ridley Update and Future Plans

by President Jack Miller

Last March 2020 a decree from DCNR (Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources) stated that group trail work should cease as a way of slowing the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Individual trail maintainers continued to keep their trails open and clear during the year and they did a magnificent job. We thank them for their dedication. There were several Friends who used their own chain saws to clear damage from the many storms during the shutdown and we are forever grateful for their hard work.

In January 2021 the Board members of the Friends of Ridley Creek State Park held a Zoom meeting with our Park Manager, Lexi Rose, and two representatives of our parent organization, PPF (Pennsylvania Parks & Forests Foundation). We prepared a list of projects to work on once we got relief from the COVID-19 restrictions.

We completed the reblazing of the White Trail in October 2020. For the new season, we have the following plans:

- Reblaze the Blue, Yellow, and Orange trails using the procedure we used for the White Trail.
- Make a survey of all bridges and stairs along our hiking trail system: We know there's some storm damage to some of the structures that needs to be addressed; some of these projects may require permits from DCNR and we are awaiting final approval of the new standards.
- Add new trail markers to the areas where our hiking trails intersect with the paved Multi Use Trail (MUT); some hiking trails follow the MUT until they cross over to the next hiking trail and the new markers will make this transition clearer.

## COVID-19 GUIDELINES UPDATED

On March 17, we received notice from the Park Manager, Lexi Rose, that the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) issued the latest "operational stance" beginning April 4 and remaining in place until May 23.

- **Friends group meetings** - must be virtual or outdoors – cannot be indoors in a park or forest facility. For outdoor facilities, must be under the 50% occupancy limit per DOH guidelines, practice social distancing, and wear masks.

- **Volunteer work days are not events, and are permitted to resume**
  - Max occupancy is 40 per group
  - May have multiple groups in park in separate geographic locations
  - May have multiple groups that attend at different times
  - Masks and social distancing are required
- **Friends Groups events** – On a case by case basis – if we want to plan something, we need to send Lexi an email to discuss possibilities.

**THESE NEW GUIDELINES WILL ALLOW US TO RESUME MONTHLY TRAIL WORK DAYS IN MAY.** We plan to start with reblazing the blue trail. Trail work volunteers will receive further instructions by email before May 1.

## PHOTO CONTESTS

Our annual Friends of Ridley Creek State Park photo contest was cancelled in 2020. We would certainly like to hold a photo contest for 2021. We are looking into how the contest could be conducted for this year if we cannot hold our usual judging of photographs and award ceremony in public. Please look for photo opportunities in Ridley Creek State Park and capture that special scene for your entry. Photos of past contest entries are available on the Friends web site. Photographers can also check out the PPF (Pennsylvania Parks & Forests Foundation) photo contest, which has a deadline of September 20, 2021. Details can be found at [www.ppf.events/2021photocontest](http://www.ppf.events/2021photocontest).

*continued page 4*



*His Majesty* - 2016 Honorable Mention, by Elizabeth Duckworth

## **ANNUAL THANK YOU PICNIC AND ELECTION OF OFFICERS**

The Friends did not hold our annual thank you picnic for our members and volunteers in 2020 but we hope to be able to hold the picnic in 2021. We want all of our volunteers to know their efforts are appreciated. The members and volunteers picnic will have to wait until the Covid regulations allow us to serve food at an event. At the annual picnic we usually elect Board officers for the Friends of Ridley Creek State Park. In 2020 we conducted the elections online, which we will probably do again this year.

## **RETURN TO TRAIL WORK PICNIC**

The Friends intend to hold a thank you picnic on one of the Saturday trail work days when we are permitted to serve food, as mentioned above (not in May). We are looking forward to being able to hold this event as soon as possible and will keep you posted.

## **FIRST DAY HIKE**

The Friends of Ridley would like to offer a First Day Hike in 2022. This event would obviously be held on January 1st at a time and place within the Park to be decided. We plan to offer hot beverages and a snack before taking off on a guided hike. The weather at that time of the year provides many unusual and special sights. The sun shining through the leafless trees and glistening off the ice on a partially frozen Ridley Creek is something you need to experience in person. We look forward to sharing this opportunity with you.

## **50TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION**

As you can see from information printed on the Park maps, Ridley Creek State Park was first opened to the public in August 1972. The Friends of Ridley would like to organize a 50th Anniversary event to celebrate that milestone in August 2022. We are looking for stories, special events, or remembrances from the public that we could share at the celebration. We are hoping to create a souvenir booklet to commemorate this event and want to include photos, documents, and stories collected in the last 50 years. Of course, this event will require some volunteers to help plan and host the event. If anyone has any ideas, information, or is willing to help, please contact one of the officers listed on the Friends web site. We still have plenty of time to make this a special celebration.

## **FUTURE UPDATES**

Future updates will appear on the Friends website [www.FriendsofRCSP.org](http://www.FriendsofRCSP.org) and on the bulletin board on the Multi-Use Trail. We intend to set a firm schedule for each event and plan out all the details as soon as we can. Newly scheduled events may be sent by email to our entire email list. Stay tuned.

