

INTRODUCING THE 31-ACRE HUGHES PRESERVE AT BRIAR HILL

BY: **GAIL FARMER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

In 2020, Wissahickon Trails acquired a 31-acre property in Blue Bell, adjacent to Briar Hill Preserve. This property, named the Hughes Preserve at Briar Hill, will be forever protected as open space and expands Briar Hill to more than 100 acres. Acquisition of this property was made possible through a partnership with Tim and Aurora Hughes, Saly Glassman, and Ira Berman. This tract of land is especially important because it protects even more of the Prophecy Creek Corridor. The Hughes Preserve at Briar Hill and its trails will open to the public in 2021.

"My wife, Aurora, and I are passionate about open space, particularly within the Wissahickon Valley watershed, and are very pleased to have been involved in the preservation of this beautiful meadow and surrounding woodlands," said Mr. Hughes. He explained that "this corner of the world is spectacular, but the land can't protect itself. In order for it to stay this way, active community engagement—at any level—is critical. We look at this stunning expanse



PHOTO: MADALYN NEEF

Socially distanced group photo of the partners involved in the land acquisition process.

of untouched land and are pleased to do our part to preserve its inherent, natural beauty for the next generations."

The Hughes Preserve at Briar Hill is a beautiful property comprised of forest and meadow habitats that are important for many species of insects and wildlife. In the near future, we will be creating new trails that will connect to the existing trail system at Briar Hill preserve, more accessible now thanks to the installation of a new, community-funded, bridge at the preserve entrance. In addition, Glassman and Berman donated a trail easement on the property in front of the Hughes Preserve that will allow us to build a trail connection to nearby Camp Woods and Armentrout Preserve.

With the recent acquisition of the Hughes Preserve, there are now 220.92-acres of protected open space in the immediate area. That number reflects the combined acreage of Briar Hill Preserve, Cheston Family Preserve, Whitpain Township's Prophecy Creek Park, and several easements. We have been working with municipal, county and state partners, and individual residents for more than a decade to expand protected lands along the Prophecy Creek—which flows into the Wissahickon Creek—through a combination of land acquisition and conservation easements. The protection of these open spaces is part of a strategic prioritization of the Prophecy Creek Corridor—essentially the vegetative stream buffer along Prophecy Creek. This preservation reflects our long-term commitment to protecting key natural areas in the Wissahickon watershed.



PHOTO: MARGARET ROHDE

Hughes Preserve at Briar Hill in the summer.



2020 FINANCIAL SUMMARY

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

12/31/20

ASSETS

CASH	259,931
CONTRIBUTIONS & GRANTS RECEIVABLE	585,111
INVESTMENTS	7,837,495
CONSERVATION EASEMENTS, PROPERTY, PLANT & EQUIPMENT, NET	13,368,072

OTHER ASSETS	33,672
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TOTAL ASSETS	22,084,281
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LIABILITIES

ACCOUNTS PAYABLE & OTHER LIABILITIES	359,988
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NET ASSETS

WITHOUT DONOR RESTRICTIONS	15,532,303
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WITH DONOR RESTRICTIONS	6,191,990
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TOTAL NET ASSETS	21,724,293
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TOTAL LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS	22,084,281
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SUPPORT & REVENUE

CONTRIBUTIONS & GRANTS	2,482,777
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PROGRAMS & OTHER REVENUE	197,477
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RELEASES FROM RESTRICTIONS NET OF SUPPORT FOR FUTURE WORK	68,080
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TOTAL SUPPORT & REVENUE	2,748,334
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EXPENSES

CONSERVATION & ENGAGEMENT	1,818,533
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DEVELOPMENT	348,184
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ADMINISTRATIVE	323,770
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TOTAL EXPENSES	2,490,487
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PHOTO: MARGARET RHODE



2020 was an unprecedented year and we came through it stronger than ever thanks to your unwavering support coupled with the hard work and perseverance of our staff and board.

In order to be a good steward of nature, it is essential that we be a good steward of the dollars contributed by the many donors who invest in our mission. We are careful with how we use those dollars and I am pleased to share our 2020 Statement of Financial Position. We closed the year in strong financial standing. Our support was fueled by individuals, foundations, businesses, and market growth, providing us with funding and an asset base to support our conservation and engagement initiatives. If you read By the Numbers (pg. 3), you can get a sense of how we have converted contributed dollars into more protected and improved habitats, a cleaner creek, more diverse wildlife communities, trail improvements, and more opportunities for people to enjoy and learn about nature. Our revenues and expenses were nearly double what they have been in past years owing to two significant conservation projects, the acquisition of the Hughes Preserve at Briar Hill and the installation of the Wissahickon Headwaters Riparian Restoration Project.

Thank you for your investment and for sharing in our vision of creating a Wissahickon Valley where people and nature can thrive.

Gail Farmer

Gail Farmer



2020 BY THE NUMBERS

995 community members financially supported our mission through annual fund donations, monthly giving, and designated gifts. For a complete list of donors visit our website.

13 safe in-person events—some of which were before Covid-19 restrictions—allowed us to spend socially distant time with 909 community members.

2,923 new friends connected with us online, through donations, and at virtual programs.

31 acres of open space forever protected at the new Hughes Preserve at Briar Hill.

77 corporations, foundations, and small businesses supported our work.

12 new trails maps and 1 new website with trail finding tools launched to improve our community's connection with the Wissahickon.

2 new trail easements increased connections between preserves.

290 volunteers contributed 2,922 hours of work.

47,233 gallons of storm-water managed on 2 residential properties through the Stream Smart Housecalls Program.

275 tons of sediment and 475 lbs of nutrients are estimated to be removed from the Wissahickon Creek each year thanks to our recently completed floodplain and stream restoration project near the Green Ribbon Trailhead in Upper Gwynedd.

734 wildlife observations recorded in iNaturalist by 73 Community Scientists.

1 new footbridge installed at Briar Hill Preserve over a tributary to the Prophecy Creek, allowing trail users to keep their feet dry.

105 birds across 18 species studied at our MAPS Bird Banding Station at Crossways Preserve.

97 monarch butterflies tagged to track their migration and 32 were reared by staff and residents from The Hill at Whitemarsh.

21 trails received new names and were assigned colors, making them easier to find and navigate.

17 virtual programs engaged 706 community members in deepening their connection to the natural world of the Wissahickon.

30 nestlings lived in nesting boxes on our preserves until they were ready to strike out on their own.

19 new nesting boxes and nesting tubes were installed by an Eagle Scout at Willow Lake Farm, Crossways, Armentrout, and Dodsworth Run Preserves.

175 bags of trash removed from the Wissahickon Creek and surrounding trails.

25 species of native wildflowers seeded in meadow patches at Crossways Preserve to support pollinators.



YOUR COMMUNITY AT WORK

iNaturalist Volunteer Project Opportunity

BY: **JENN BILGER**

Looking to become more involved with your community in a way that helps the environment but keeps you safe during a pandemic? We have an opportunity for you to volunteer on your own or with family. There is no nature identification knowledge needed, you just snap photos, upload them to iNaturalist, and that data is verified by scientists and sent to us.

PHOTO: FREDERIC STRAWBRIDGE



Your participation in this project helps us understand the wildlife and plants that live on our preserves year-round. Having this information better informs our conservation management plans—knowing what plants and animals currently exist there (or don't, but should), is helpful in that process.

If you are interested, please sign up on the volunteer page and check «iNaturalist BioBlitz» on the volunteer interest form and we will reach out to you with further training and instructions.

Board of Directors Bulletin

BY: **MADALYN NEFF**

We'd like to recognize two members of the Board of Directors who have completed their terms and welcome two new members.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SERVICE

PHOTO: DAN BURKE



Ellen Duncan first joined the Board in 2000. She will continue to serve on the Development Committee, Conservation Committee, and the Emeritus Board. We thank her for her thoughtful leadership and management of the Green Ribbon Gala for many years.

PHOTO: DAN BURKE



Neil Trueblood served on the Board since 2012. He will continue to serve on the Byrne Farm Committee, Conservation Committee, and Emeritus Board. During his time on the board, he provided an innovative vision for the future and expertise for land use and construction.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

COURTESY OF ANN LAUGHLIN



Ann Laughlin is the co-founder of Eco-Chic Gardens, an eco-conscious landscape design company. Ann brings many years of plant knowledge and business acumen to her role. She is passionate about the field of horticulture, landscape design, and the outdoor environment.

PHOTO: DAN BURKE



Brent Hooker is an international lawyer working for Chubb Limited, a large multinational insurance company. Brent co-founded the Environmental Law Society at his law school to promote the role and legal standing of the environment in broad spectrum legal practice.



Creek Watch Volunteers

BY: **JENN BILGER**

The Creek Watch Program was created in 2014 as part of our work on the Delaware River Watershed Initiative and is still going strong despite the pandemic. In 2020, our 64 dedicated Creek Watch volunteers continued to monitor their sites alone or in pods that maintained safety. They are our eyes and ears along the creek, and ensure that we were notified of any erosion, pollution, or interesting interactions with wildlife along the Wissahickon Creek and its tributaries.

Community Science Program

BY: **MARGARET ROHDE, DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION COMMITTEE CO-CHAIR**



Language matters, and Wissahickon Trails aims to choose language that makes every person feel included in our mission. With this in mind, moving forward, our "Citizen Science" program will be called "Community Science." Citizenship has no bearing on anyone's ability to participate in the data collection that supports our monitoring and restoration efforts and we want our program name to reflect that. From now

on, our collaboration with others to learn more about our environment will be referred to as our "Community Science" initiative, and those participating as "Community Scientists."

From our Salamander Monitoring and Monarch Tagging Projects, to our Creek Watch and Conservation Crew Programs, our goal is to gain greater knowledge about, and care for, the living things and the living systems around us. To achieve this goal, we must do more than collect information, we must bring together a community of people who share a passion for the natural world. Everyone has something to contribute to this work and nature needs every one of us.

Learn more about our Community Science program at wissahickontrails.org/take-action/volunteer



Welcome New Staff

BY: **JENN BILGER & ANNA MARCHINI**

Erin Landis worked in environmental



Erin Landis, Water Programs Manager

remediation in the corporate world for four years at Langan Engineering & Environmental Services before switching to the environmental non-profit world in 2019, when she joined The Watershed Institute as their River Friendly Coordinator.

She is a Master Watershed Steward who grew up

locally and cares about her community; she was an integral member of the Ambler EAC and key to the implementation of the Growing Ambler Greener initiative.

In her pre-Covid leisure time she liked having backyard fires with friends, rock climbing, camping, and traveling; but now she might be found hiking with her dog and husband, eating chocolate daily, or in her backyard gardening and hanging out with her chickens.

Samantha Douglas joined Wissahickon Trails'



Samantha Douglas, Development Manager

Development department last year and has made a positive impact since her first day. Born and raised in Morehead City, North Carolina, she graduated from North Carolina State University in 2015 with a degree in history and Classical Studies.

In 2020, Samantha, her husband, and their young daughter, along with their two dogs moved to Pennsylvania. Samantha is drawn to the outdoors, particularly the beach, and appreciates the exceptional beauty of the Wissahickon Valley.

At Wissahickon Trails' Samantha is responsible for making sure our donors know how important their support is to the mission. She never turns down an opportunity to connect with people and is always looking for ways for donors to learn more about our work.

IN CELEBRATION OF PHIL ALBRIGHT

BY: **MADALYN NEFF & GAIL FARMER**

We celebrate the life and legacy of Philip R. Albright who passed away this year at the age of 88. Phil is a legend at Wissahickon Trails, a friend, leader, and mentor who we will remember fondly and whose legacy lives on in the preserved lands of this region.

We were lucky to call Phil and his wife, Barbara, friends for nearly 30 years. On paper, Phil was a generous donor, board member (2003-2012), board chair (2008-2010), and served on the Advisory Board (2012-2021). But the gifts he brought to the organization can't be recorded on a resume or in a database. It was his insightful and direct approach coupled with his warmth and kindness that we will hold dear.

He believed in the protection of open space and the value of being good stewards. "God doesn't make land anymore. So, we're not going to get any freebies. We have to take care of the land we have, and we do a good job of that." A supporter of educating the next generation he said, "We have to keep broadening our footprint. Working with the younger set, grade school level particularly, is where these kids are going to soak up this knowledge about the critters in the creek and all that good stuff. This is where it starts."

As Emeritus Board member Neil Trueblood said, "There are a few in the community that simply give it all, consistently, and he is one who led many to do important community building. I will miss his friendship, leadership, wisdom, and warm, caring personality."



PHOTO: DAN BURKE



PHOTO: JAMIE STEWART

SUPPORTER SPOTLIGHT: JOY ROMAN

BY: ANNA MARCHINI



COURTESY OF JOY ROMAN

Joy Roman with husband Matt and kids Lena and Enzo

Joy Roman has lived across the globe—from California to Singapore to Minnesota—and for the past four years has called Ambler home. As an avid runner, she always seeks out trails to keep her mileage up and found just the right place along the Green Ribbon Trail. Like for many others, the trails became a respite during the pandemic, and she has introduced friends and family to this gem in their backyards. “Everyone should know about the preserves and trails. I’ve enjoyed showing people where they are because it opens up a new world for them” says Joy.

More than a user of the trail, Joy realized the importance of being involved in other ways as well.

She and her family have participated in the annual Creek Clean Up, attended last year’s hybrid Green Ribbon Gala, and make a monthly donation as a Green Ribbon Circle member because she does what she can “to keep this great resource available.”



HORSES & HIKERS: HOW TO SHARE THE TRAIL



COURTESY OF HORSEWAYS

Trail Etiquette 101

If you visit our trails, you may have noticed that we share them with equestrians (horseback riders). Horses almost always have the right-of-way as they are very large and can be skittish, so hikers and dog walkers should give them a wide berth, speak calmly, and avoid quick movements.

Let’s Talk About Poop

Folks have asked us why dog poop must be picked up but not horse poop. Horses have a vegetarian diet, so their manure is relatively “clean”, breaks down quickly, and has less bacteria, parasites or viruses. Dog poop, however, can contain pathogens that can leach into groundwater, creeks, and reservoirs, and is one of the main sources of fecal coliform bacteria in our waterways. Dog poop can also contain Cryptosporidium, Giardia, E. coli, and Salmonella.

Our trails are generally narrow, so horse poop can take up a significant portion of the trail. For hikers, please try to step over the poop or walk around it. For horseback riders, consider using a horse manure bag when visiting our trails, or if you realize your horse is about to go, try to step off to the side of the trail.

Whether you are an equestrian or a hiker, you know first-hand how important reciprocal trail etiquette is to a positive trail experience. Thank you for the important role you play in keeping our trails a safe and enjoyable place to spend time.

This piece was written in partnership with Horseways, a non-profit in Lower Gwynedd and Whitpain Townships that fosters partnerships to ensure there is always space for horses in the community.

SPRING & SUMMER ON OUR PRESERVES

PHOTOS & ARTICLE BY: **KRISTY MORLEY**

Spring and summer are the best times to visit our trails and preserves. Mammals emerge from hibernation and migrant birds return filling the woods with their songs. The dull grays and browns of winter are pushed away by green leaves and multi-color flowers. Here are some things you might see:



Eastern Chipmunk
Emerging from hibernation in spring, look for them foraging for seeds, nuts, and insects to replace the weight they have lost over the winter.



Question Mark This butterfly is one of a few species that spends the winter as an adult, so it is often one of the first butterflies seen in the spring. Look for them searching for nectar at early blooming flowers and trees.



Trout Lily
A spring ephemeral, blooming on the forest floor before the trees have leaves.



Eastern Redbud The spring flowers of this native tree are an important source of nectar and pollen for bees and butterflies. Later in the summer, its leaves provide food for the Henry's elfin butterfly caterpillars.



Blue-gray Gnatcatcher
Their high-pitched and nasal calls are usually the best clue to their presence. Look for them in late spring collecting lichens and spiderwebs to fashion their small cup shaped nest.

Woodland Lucy
Firefly eggs laid last summer spent the winter developing underground. Warming days encourage the final metamorphosis into an adult so we see their flashing lights on summer evenings.



Frogs and Toads
Look for their jelly-like clusters of eggs in calm areas of the creek or even in puddles.

OUR MISSION

We inspire and engage diverse communities of people to protect, steward, and enjoy the land and waterways of the Wissahickon Valley.

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Printed on
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MANY THANKS TO OUR 2020 EVENT SPONSORS FOR CONTINUING TO SUPPORT OUR LOCAL ENVIRONMENT.

CREEK CLEAN UP



WALK THE WISSAHICKON



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