

SPRING 2019



News *in* *Nature*

The Official Publication of Berks Nature

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Letter from the President...

Proud to be a Partner

Berks Nature partners with many organizations and individuals as we work to protect the environment and connect people to nature and conservation. We partner with governmental agencies like municipalities, water authorities, Army Corps and the Natural Resource Conservation Service to do demonstration projects, storm water improvement activities and trail improvement. We partner with local organizations and agencies to accomplish watershed wide stream restoration, including, County Department of Agriculture and The County Department of Agriculture. We partner with individuals and families to protect their land, to volunteer, to monitor our waterways through community science programs, and to participate and be involved in our programming and the life of The Nature Place. We partner with numerous other non-profits, like Berks Area Mountain Biking Association (BAMBA), the Visitors Bureau, and the Chamber to help elevate the conservation conversation and demonstrate how nature is essential to our quality of life. And we partner with our members and donors to help make their philanthropic gestures make real life differences in the lives of Berks County residents and our environment.

All of these partnerships are unique and important to our work. However, there is a special partnership that we have been a

part of for the pasts four years that I would like to share a little bit about: The Alliance for Watershed Education, or AWE.

The Alliance for Watershed Education is a regional initiative of 23 partnering environmental education centers- all located along a Circuit Trail or major connecting trail, and on waterways throughout the Delaware River Watershed in Delaware, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. (Visit www.watershedalliance.org/centers to see a list of them all!). The Alliance shares a mission




to provide education and recreational opportunities that inspire personal conservation action, improve water quality, strengthen community ties, and increase access to trails and waterways. The Alliance is a national model to help similar ecosystems and vulnerable national waterways around the country.

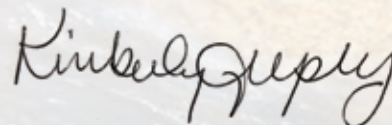
Funded and supported by the William Penn Foundation, the centers aim to build capacity and increase their collective impact within the watershed and its communities. The centers are located

in diverse landscapes across the watershed- including densely populated urban areas, suburban spaces and rural regions. Individually and independently successful and collectively impactful, the centers network is built upon three key aspects: aligned communications, joint programming and shared professional development. To learn more about AWE please visit www.watershedalliance.org/

It is partnerships like AWE (and our many others) that allows Berks Nature to share resources, ideas, best practices, and evaluation methods to improve and make things better in our own community. We couldn't do what we do without the cooperative spirit among these organizations. We are very proud of our many partners and their work, and we are grateful to work together with them in conservation. (To find other local conservation organizations visit: www.flipsnack.com/9D56F88A9F7/berks-nature-be-a-good-neighbor.html)

We look forward to a wonderful spring and summer! 

Warmly,



Kimberly J Murphy
President



Contact our Team: BerksNature.org | info@BerksNature.org | 575 St. Bernardine Street, Reading, PA 19607 | 610.372.4992



Where to Find Us

The staff of Berks Nature is busy all over Berks County!

The staff of Berks Nature is busy all over Berks County! But you can find us at our headquarters The Nature Place- at 575 St. Bernardine Street in Reading's Angelica Creek Park, between 8:30 am-4 pm Monday through Friday.

For up to date information on Berks Nature, including events and other calendar happenings, visit us online at www.BerksNature.org, or find us on Facebook and Instagram!

Questions? Call us at 610-372-4992 x100, or shoot us an email at info@berksnature.org.

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Just like it takes a diversity of species to make our natural environment thrive, Berks Nature recognizes that having a culture of inclusion where all individuals feel respected, and are treated fairly will bring us a power of talent to do our work and engage others in the love for and protection of nature. Accordingly, it is Berks Nature's goal to be intentional and inclusive in the involvement, engagement, and empowerment of all groups of people within our community to help Berks Nature achieve its mission. Berks Nature will take the broadest possible view of diversity in order to attract, develop, engage and retain people from all walks of life and backgrounds in our work. Berks Nature endeavors to not see any species become extinct. So to, we desire not to neglect or exclude any audience from our work.

Stop by and see The Nature Place for yourself during our open lobby hours- Tuesday through Friday 10AM-3PM, and Saturday 10AM-4PM. A full list of fun ideas for your visit can be found on the back cover of this newsletter.

Find your next adventure at The Nature Place!

Home to Berks Nature's headquarters, Eco-Camp and our new Nature Preschool, The Nature Place sits among nearly 100-acres in Reading's Angelica Park. Among the things you can do on your visit:

New! Pick up a copy of our new I-SPY Nature Challenge in our lobby

Learn more about the wildlife that surrounds us in Angelica Park through our new I-SPY Nature Hunt! Grab a free copy at the front desk, then make your way down the list as you find all of the wildlife throughout our first floor. Those who complete the challenge win a small prize!

- ✔ Stroll the wetland trails throughout the park- but first, pick up a free explorer pack, available for loan at the lobby front desk!
- ✔ Let the kiddos run free with their imaginations in our Nature Play Zone, open to the public during daylight hours.
- ✔ Attend a program inside The Nature Place.
- ✔ Visit our lobby exhibits, including our indoor observational beehive!
- ✔ Say hello to our three rescued 3-toed Eastern Box Turtles: Angelica, Kenny & Hanna.
- ✔ Tour the green features of the building, designed to achieve LEED silver status.
- ✔ Grab a treat for your dog at the desk inside our dog-friendly lobby, then make sure they stay hydrated by visiting our dog water foundation along the path.
- ✔ Take a peek out our birding window- from the Great Blue Heron to red-tailed hawks, bald eagles and the park's token mascot, the red-winged blackbird, you never know who you may see.
- ✔ View life up close through one of the microscopes set up and available for use in the lobby.
- ✔ Visit our native plant gardens and teaching garden outside the building.
- ✔ Host your next meeting at The Nature Place! Our conference rooms and classrooms are available for rent.
- ✔ Celebrate your child's birthday with one of our customizable party packages! Call us to learn more, or visit BerksNature.org.



Are you a current Berks Nature member? Joining, or renewing your membership, is quick and easy! Read more about membership and its benefits, and become a member today at www.BerksNature.org/Donate.



Proud to be LEED GOLD Certified



Here at Berks Nature, we have some exciting news to share...

In March, we learned that The Nature Place was awarded LEED Gold status by the U.S. Green Building Council!

What does that mean? Here's a little cheat sheet: Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design (LEED) certification is bestowed by the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) based on a rating system that measures a building's environmental impact. Projects earn LEED points based on items such as site selection, the management of the construction process, water efficiency, energy use, materials selection, indoor air quality, and educational impact.

"Achieving LEED certification by the USGBC was an intentional and important decision by our Board of Directors," Berks Nature President Kim Murphy said. "We knew The Nature Place needed to inspire others in the community through demonstration projects, and we are proud to receive recognition as a LEED Gold building in Berks."

Among the sustainable features you'll find at The Nature Place:

- 100% of the building's energy use offset by wind power.
- Over one third of the entire building is reclaimed and recycled materials, including wooden stair treads and carpet.
- Exterior siding reclaimed from Pennsylvania mushroom farms, and stone recycled from New England barns.
- Light-colored roofing that reflects rather than absorbs the sun's rays.
- Horizontal sun shades that act like visors on the windows, minimizing solar heat gain and glare inside the building.
- State-of-the-art bird-strike reduction glass
- Rain gardens to manage the building's stormwater, a Monarch-Way Station & Pollinator Garden
- Daylight sensor to automatically dim the lights in the building when the sun is shining.
- Native plant demonstration, a bio filter septic system, an observation bee hive and much, much more!

Since opening in 2017, "The Nature Place has already exemplified the concept of 'Building as a Teaching Tool,'" said Architect Kate Scurlock, of Baltimore-based GWWO Architects.

Early on in the design process, she added, Berks Nature identified LEED certification as an important goal for The Nature Place.

"After many discussions and careful tracking throughout design and construction, GWWO Architects is thrilled to have The Nature Place achieve LEED Gold," Scurlock said. "The Gold certification is due to hard work and coordination by the design and construction teams, along with Berks Nature's dedication to the conservation of the environment."

Sustainable Features

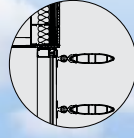
Exterior siding is reclaimed wood from Pennsylvania mushroom farms. Exterior stone is recycled from New England barns.



Light-colored roofing reflects rather than absorbs the sun's rays, minimizing a heat island effect.



Horizontal sun shades act like visors on the windows, minimizing solar heat gain and glare inside the building.



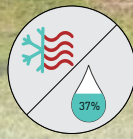
A horizontal line pattern etched into the glass makes the glass visible to birds and safeguards against accidental bird collisions.



Window placement ensures that over 80% of occupied spaces enjoy maximum daylighting and views to Angelica Park and Neversink Mountain's natural beauty.



Attractive rain gardens collect and filter the roof's storm water runoff before returning it to the aquifer.



High-performance heating and air conditioning systems will save over 30% more energy than a typical building, while plumbing fixtures will save over 37% more water.




Daylight sensors automatically dim the lights when the sun is shining. Energy-efficient LED lighting reduces energy use.



Over one third of the entire building is reclaimed and recycled materials, including wood stair treads and carpet.




The building's orientation toward the north enables the gentlest natural sunlight to illuminate much of the indoor space.

Interested in learning more about the green and sustainable features that earned The Nature Place LEED Gold status? Keep an eye out for our ENews (subscribe at BerksNature.org!), where we'll put the spotlight on different green features of the building and grounds over the coming months. Or, stop out and see it for yourself- we'd love to give you a tour! 



Green Features of The Nature Place

Spotlight On: Reclaimed Mushroom House Boards

Ever notice that beautiful siding as you drive by or walk up to The Nature Place? The cypress and hemlock planks that make up our exterior wood siding was once used on mushroom houses in Pennsylvania! Using reclaimed wood helps to preserve the forests and reduce landfill waste. Among the other benefits of Cypress and Hemlock siding? Durability and resistance to weather and humidity, as well as an attractive coloring. 

Happenings at The Nature Place

In February, our team enjoyed a visit and presentations by the Governor Mifflin Cumru Gifted Students (2nd-4th grade). Their sustainability innovation projects blew our minds and, best of all, they were based on data from our very own State of the Environment in Berks report!



Spotted at The Nature Place quite frequently this spring: The Great Blue Heron! Did you know, these beautiful birds have a wingspan of 6 feet, but weigh only 5-6 lbs, as their bones are hollow.



Our adult Scientist for a Night series, or “Nerd Nights” as some have dubbed them, have been a hit! As have our Family Science Nights- both of which were sell-out nights. Keep an eye out for more of these events to be scheduled in the coming months! And, register early to secure your spot for these and other increasingly popular events.



Our friends from John Paul II Center for Special Learning recently spent a morning making native seed bombs with us- with purple cone flower and brown-eyes susan seeds from outside The Nature Place. These seed bombs are currently on sale at the register in The Nature Place store!




From giant pumpkins to milkweed, and so much in between, we had seeds for every type of gardener to usher in the planting season at our February Seed Swap, led by our Ambassadors Karin Wulkowicz and Mark Priebe, with help from Jan and Mike Slater.



A result of last year’s 10th Anniversary State of the Environment program and report, our environmental Summits have drawn partners and stakeholders to The Nature Place for healthy discussion and brainstorming over the past two months on how Berks County can track and make positive changes in the following categories: Air, Energy, Water, Waste & Land. We’ve left each Summit feeling even more inspired to move forward into our second decade of State of the Environment in Berks.



Our Nature Preschoolers had a blast in the snow this past winter! 

2018 By the Numbers:

8,825 Acres of Land Protected

Our relationships with hundreds of landowners and partners protect important land and water resources. This will ensure clean drinking water and open space for future generations. Since 1974, a total of 8,825 acres has been protected by Berks Nature through conservation easements and land acquisitions.

200+ People engaged at 10th Annual State of the Environment Breakfast in November

Our 10-year State of the Environment Report Card showed Berks County's progress in the following areas: Land, Air, Water, Waste & Energy. Download our Year 10 Report at BerksNature.org, or pick up a copy inside The Nature Place lobby.

600+ Trees Planted

In 2018, over 600 trees were planted to protect water quality in Berks County. Working with Berks Nature Ambassadors, schools and municipalities, the public was engaged and educated on the importance of planting trees.

29 Berks Nature Ambassadors

Our trained volunteers serve as an extension of our team, who can lead programs and projects tailored to their environmental interests.



5,000+ Educational Program Participants

Utilizing The Nature Place for educational programs, fieldtrips, and going out on classroom visits helps to grow the next generation of environmental stewards and engage adults in continued learning to connect them to nature.


27 miles Getting Outside on the Trails!

Berks Nature has created numerous trails and connections, and manages 27 miles of trails in the Greater Reading area. Pick up a trail map inside The Nature Place lobby today!

Miles and miles of streams improved

Berks Nature and partners work with landowners throughout the year to improve water quality. This is done by planting trees along the streambanks, to installing Best Management Practices (BMPs) on farms and other properties. The use of BMPs on agricultural properties ensures pesticides, fertilizers, and animal waste are filtered out of storm water before they reach local waterways. Among our favorite projects this past year: Working with Governor Mifflin students to install a riparian buffer along Rabbit Run Stream on their campus!

60+ Boats

Our first-ever Angelica Creek Regatta was a runaway success, with students from neighboring Governor Mifflin School District building more than 60 boats, which they raced in teams down Angelica Creek in May. We're looking forward to our second Regatta next month! 



Summer Eco-Camp

Registration Now Open!



Here at Berks Nature, we believe nature is essential to our quality of life. Our annual summer Eco-Camp is the perfect way to pass that value down to your child/children. We're excited to welcome campers back this summer for another season of exploration, learning, fun and nature-play at The Nature Place at Angelica Park!

Registration is now open for 2019 Eco-Camp!

Among the new and exciting things to look out for this summer:

- A special Eco-Camp sleepover at The Nature Place on Aug. 13th!
- Weekly hot dog parties around our new fire pit
- An exciting two-week weather-focused camp for campers in grades 5-8 (July 15-19; and July 22-26)
- Visits from the Nurture Your Nature Organization

Each week, the following age groups will be offered:

Preschool: Ages 3 (potty-trained) and up. This group will have their own preschool director and instructors, separate from the older campers.

Grades K-4th, and 5th-8th: Kindergarten through 4th grade will form the second camp group, followed by grades 5-8.

*** Campers will be grouped according to age on excursions. Please note: scheduled trips, special group visits, and activities may be altered, changed or even cancelled due to unforeseen circumstances.*

Weekly Themes & Fees

Eco-Camp 2019 Themes and Full-Day Fees

Prices listed are per camper, per week, and reflect the extension activities planned for campers in grades 3-8 that week. Don't want to send your child for a full day of camp? We offer half-day, morning Eco-Camp at a rate of \$110/week per child. Before and after care available at \$25/each, a.m. and p.m., per week.

Week 1: Getting to Know Our Angelica Wetlands (June 10-14th) \$210/per camper

This week will be filled with chances to explore the wetlands, learn about the nature in it, and then transfer that knowledge and express those feelings in nature. Remember to bring your camera and any other tools to express what you want in your nature journal!

Week 2: Reptiles and Amphibians (June 17-21st) \$210/per camper (Preschool) \$235/per camper (K-8 with excursion)

What kinds of reptiles and amphibians inhabit the wetlands? We'll be on the search for these types of living organisms, with the help of our very own Charlie Randozzo. We'll take a trip to the Lehigh Valley Zoo to further discover some of those same critters that we find in the wetlands at Angelica. We'll also welcome a visit from Critter Connections, which will show us through hands-on learning the wildlife that calls Pennsylvania home.

Special Excursion: Lehigh Valley Zoo. Most of the campers will take a trip to the Lehigh Valley Zoo on Thursday, June 20th, and spend the day learning more about the animals of Pennsylvania.

Week 3: Wacky Science Experiments and the 3 R's (June 24-28th) \$210/per camper (Preschool) \$225/per camper (K-8 with excursion)

Reduce, reuse, recycle! This week, we'll tackle some cool science experiments that are backed by science principles, as well as create our own "junk art" out of the items we recycle. Additionally, we'll kick off our famous boat race, and egg drop extravaganza on the Schuylkill River Bridge. The week will end with a *pool party at the Ken Grill Pool in nearby Kenhorst.

Special Excursion: Ken Grill Pool. We'll cool off with a Ken Grill Pool Party, from noon-3pm on Wednesday, June 26th. Campers will walk to the pool on the mile-long trail, and will be able to buy lunch at the pool and enjoy time with camper friends.

Week 4: Cyclemania Bike Week! (July 8-12th) \$210/per camper

Our popular bike week returns with rides of different distances and a rodeo that has never been seen before at The Nature Place. We'll welcome a visit from John Pacharis, of Berks Area Mountain Biking Association, who will join us on a bike hike. Among other things: we'll again ride to Gibraltar, where we'll stop at Scoupe deVille Ice Cream shop for a cool treat before heading back to The Nature Place.

**NOTE: Bike rides and activities will be based mostly on ability and not always age.*

Week 5: Weather All Around Us (July 15-19th) \$210/per Camper

**Note: This is the first of a two-week weather camp for grades 5-8. The second week will take place July 22-26th.*

We'll learn about weather in and around

It pays to be a member!

Become a Berks Nature member today at the Family Level and receive a 10% discount on summer Eco-Camp fees, in addition to a 30% discount on many of our events and programs. Join online, at BerksNature.org, at the register inside The Nature Place lobby, or over the phone, by calling 610-372-4992 x100.

Berks Nature's Eco-Camp is led by a team of veteran teachers, supported by members of our staff. Get to know the camp directors your child will be working with- they're looking forward to meeting you this summer!

Dave Renninger

A Shillington native, "Mr. Dave" as he's known to our Eco-Camps, graduated from Governor Mifflin High School and later Alvernia College, now Alvernia University. He joined the Berks Nature staff in 2018, after retiring from his 25-year post as a middle school science teacher at Reading's Northeast Middle School. There, he spearheaded the creation of an environmental club during his first year of teaching in the school. Here at Berks Nature, Dave serves as Eco-Camp Co-Director and Environmental Education Specialist, working alongside Anne Muvdi in our Nature Preschool. Outside of the classroom, Dave enjoys photography, mountain biking,



hiking and just being outside in nature. He's also a trained scuba diver.

Anne Muvdi

Anne joined the Berks Nature staff in September 2017 as Nature Preschool Director. Previously, Anne taught kindergarten and first grade for four years. While teaching, she received her Masters in reading, reading specialist certification, and administrative certification. Anne's love of children has carried throughout her adult life and influences every professional decision she makes. Her understanding and passion for exposing young children to nature is what brought her to Berks Nature. Children's social, psychological, academic and physical health is positively impacted when they have daily contact with nature. Whether running, hiking or biking, she expresses her own love of the outdoors by utilizing the parks and trails in and around Berks County.

our wetlands and collect weather data for NASA's GLOBE program (Global Learning an Observations to Benefit the Environment), as we welcome a visit from a NASA scientist this week! All campers will learn how to make clouds, and detect the different types of clouds and the amount of cloud cover in the sky. Older campers will track the weather all week long, before continuing with the unique the following week and digging a little deeper in to their learning.

Week 6: The Amazing World of Flying Insects (Preschool-4); & Weather All Around Us (continued for grades 5-8) (July 22-26th)

\$210/per camper (Preschool)
\$235/per camper (K-8 with excursion)

This week, we'll build a bug hotel, learn about our very own bees and go digging for all sorts of creepy crawlers. Note: Expect muddy campers at the end of each day, from digging in the soil at The Nature Place. We'll end the camp week with a trip to Hawk Mountain.

Special Excursion: Hawk Mountain. This all-day trip will take our campers on a trail hike to the North Lookout on Thursday,

July 25th. Two groups will be formed on the trip, with each group taking two different hiking trails to discover the wildlife on the mountain.

Week 7: Wild Things & Wilderness Survival (July 29-August 2nd) **\$210/per camper (Preschool)** **\$235/per camper (K-8 with excursion)**

Our popular Wild Things Week returns, where campers of all ages will learn how to survive in the wilderness using the bare necessities carried in a backpack. This week will include archery instruction and learning how to fish with a rod and bait, as well as first aid and basic survival skills, and using a compass.

Special Excursion: French Creek Park. We'll walk the trails and complete the orienteering course at French Creek on Wednesday, July 31st.

Week 8: Our Wacky Watersheds (August 5-9th) **\$210/per camper (Preschool)** **\$235/per camper (K-8 with excursion)**

Campers will learn the importance of

water to our daily lives, as well as what a watershed is and which one we live in, through interactive games and activities. We'll track the water and how it flows through our wetlands throughout the week, and pay a visit to Western Berks Water Authority and Blue Marsh Lake.

Week 9: Bat & Raptor Week (+ Camp Sleepover!) (August 12-16th) **\$210/per camper (Preschool)**

Our popular raptor week will highlight raptors and other animals from the Red Creek Wildlife Center. Now in her third year with visiting camp, Peggy from Red Creek will be showing us live birds and animals all week long. Additionally, we'll learn about the birds that make Angelica Park their home, and spy on our feathered friends through binoculars. We'll welcome a visit from Karen Campbell, a bat expert from Albright College.

**Note: Bring the whole family and join us on Tuesday evening, Aug. 13, from 6-8pm this week, to see bats in action at The Nature Place.* 🌿



Camp Basics

Registration: Registration for 2019 Eco-Camp is now open. Please note, all registration must be done online. Secure your child's place and register them today through our easy, online portal at www.BerksNature.org/eco-camp.

Location: Berks Nature Eco-Camp is held at The Nature Place, located at 575 St. Bernardine Street, Reading, PA 19607- in beautiful Angelica Creek Park.

Ages: Preschool- 8th grade.

Time: Full-day Eco-Camp begins at 9am and runs until 4pm. If you choose our half-day option, you can expect to drop your camper off at 9 and pick them up at noon.

Snacks & Meals: Campers should bring their own lunch. Some snacks are provided.

Scholarships: A limited number of full and partial scholarships are available, based on need and available funding. Financial information and documentation is required for consideration.

Morning & Afternoon Extended Care: Available to all campers for \$25 each/per week.

Morning Extended Care: Monday – Friday, Drop-off: 7:30-8:45am
Afternoon Extended Care: Monday – Friday, Pick-up: 4:15 pm – 5:3 pm

Pre-registration and payment are required for before and aftercare. 🌿



240 Acres Permanently Protected by Berks Nature in 2018

An update on our land efforts, by Berks Nature Land Protection Specialist Sarah Chudnovsky



Last year, Berks Nature partnered with landowners across the county to permanently protect 240 acres of woodland, meadow, and farmland. As we reflect on last year and look towards the rest of 2019, we're excited to share with you several projects completed in 2018, which highlight the range of our land protection work.

Throughout 2018, Berks Nature succeeded in establishing conservation easements with private landowners in the Hay Creek Watershed, the Oley Hills, and along the Kittatinny Ridge. Conservation easements, developed together with private landowners, keep land within family ownership while ensuring permanent protection of the natural resources that make Berks County special- our soil, our forests, our meadows, and our streams, creeks, and rivers. Currently, Berks Nature holds 129 conservation easements, which protect over 8,400 acres of open space across the county.


In the Hay Creek watershed in 2018, we protected 32 acres of woodland with the Meister family through the support of the Delaware River Watershed Initiative, and in partnership with Natural Lands. It's especially critical to protect unfragmented forest, and in southern Berks County, the forests of the Hay Creek watershed have a broader significance as part of the Hopewell Big Woods. According to the Hopewell Big Woods Coalition, which Berks Nature is a member of, "The Hopewell Big Woods is the last, large unbroken forest left in Southeastern PA, and is one of the most important natural areas in the region. It's an exceptional resource with hundreds of plant and bird species, pristine forest, unique wetlands, and clean streams providing open space, drinking water, and unique scenic, cultural and natural resources." This part of the county is already home to many acres of protected public land- with the Birdsboro Waters Preserve, French Creek State Park, and the William Penn State Forest District. Berks Nature's partners in the area, Natural Lands and the William Penn State Forest District, added 101 acres of public lands this past year as well through the Delaware River Watershed Initiative. We are proud to combine private conservation easements and public lands acquisitions to protect our unique landscape.



In the Oley Hills, Berks Nature has been working for many years to protect the forests that form the scenic backdrop of the Oley Valley. The Oley Hills produce six pristine, Exceptional Value (EV) streams, the highest designation given by the PA Department of Environmental Protection, which together make up 40% of the total pristine, EV streams found in the entire Schuylkill River Watershed. We are committed to working with residents and conservation partners to continue to invest in the area's legacy of conservation. By working with the Hill family in Pike and Oley townships, we protected 23 acres in 2018, including an important wetland and critical habitat for species of concern in the area. Also in 2018, we worked with landowners in the Butter Valley and the Ebst family to protect 30 acres of woodland that includes a tributary of the Perkiomen West Branch, and is located in the recharge area for the drinking water wells of the Village of Bally. Protecting clean water for our agricultural communities is a priority, and all over Berks County, we work towards healthy farms, healthy forests, and healthy streams.

In 2018, we conserved almost 150 acres in Albany Township through both private and public land protection. A conservation easement on 71 acres of the Durkin farm protects farmland, woodland, and a stretch of the Manor Creek. This now brings the total acres protected by the Durkin Winding Creek farm operation in the Manor Creek watershed to 353 acres, which includes 187.5 acres preserved with the Berks County Ag Land Preservation program. Just a couple miles north, a bit closer to the Blue Mountain, Berks Nature partnered with Hawk Mountain Sanctuary, The Conservation Fund, and the Pennsylvania Game Commission to conserve vital acreage for migratory birds by protecting a 77-acre parcel. With assistance from Berks Nature in securing a grant provided by The Conservation Fund, the Sanctuary purchased the tract, which was under threat from develop-

ers, and transferred it to the Pennsylvania Game Commission. Working with the Pennsylvania Game Commission, Berks Nature and the team at Hawk Mountain developed a plan to convert the former fields into native grasslands and meadows. In turn, this work will support migratory birds and other wildlife and expand recreational opportunities. During spring and fall, more than 150 species of raptors and songbirds follow the Blue Mountain, also known as the "Kittatinny Ridge" using habitats along its slope and base to rest and feed. The 2,500 acres at Hawk Mountain and the 9,000 acres of adjoining State Game Lands 106 offer healthy habitats for forest wildlife, but field, riparian, and wetland species have declined. Conservation of this property addresses a critical need for bird habitat locally and along the entire Ridge, as grassland and wetland birds are some of the fastest declining groups in Pennsylvania due to habitat loss. Insectivorous birds such as warblers, vireos, and flycatchers that depend upon the riparian areas or field edges will also benefit, and new foraging habitat will become available for bats, mammals, and migrating birds along with breeding areas for many amphibians.

Berks Nature is committed to creatively working with landowners and conservation partners to protect the natural resources of Berks County, and both of these projects in Albany Township build upon the legacy of our work in the Maiden Creek Watershed. The new addition to the Game Lands now permanently protects a stretch of the High Quality Designated Pine Creek, and the Durkin farm privately protects wooded riparian buffers of Manor Creek- both important Maiden Creek tributaries. Downstream, the Maiden Creek and Lake Ontelaunee serve as the source of drinking water for residents of the City of Reading. In 2019, Berks Nature is continuing to do outreach in every township along the mountain with landowners who are interested in protecting their land. 

What is a Conservation Easement?

A conservation easement is a legal agreement between a landowner and a land trust (like Berks Nature) or government agency that permanently limits uses of the land in order to protect its conservation values. It allows you to continue to own and use your land and to sell it or pass it on to heirs. People execute a conservation easement because they love their open space land, and want to protect their land from future inappropriate development while keeping their private ownership of the property. Granting an easement to a conservation organization that qualifies under the Internal Revenue Code as a "public charity" – which Berks Nature does – can yield income and estate tax savings. Moreover, Berks Nature has the expertise and experience to work with landowners and ensure that the land will remain as permanent open space.

Interested in learning more about protecting your land? Contact Sarah Chudnovsky, Berks Nature Land Specialist, at 610-372-4992 x104, or sarah.chudnovsky@berksnature.org. 



Nature Preschool at The Nature Place

Enrolling now for Fall Semester!



We're proud to offer the first environmentally-based preschool in Berks County

Just 1%. That's the time, on average, that children living in the U.S. today spend outdoors. Berks Nature knows how important outdoor play is for a child's development.

At our Nature Preschool at The Nature Place, our kiddos are outside 75% of their day, rain or shine.

As the first fully-licensed Nature Preschool in Berks County, Nature Preschool at The Nature Place aims to provide a high-quality early childhood education that meets children's developmental needs, while instilling a lasting appreciation and meaningful relationship with the natural world. Surrounded by the 100-acre Angelica Creek Park, the outdoor environment serves as a natural venue for encouraging children to explore the world with all of their senses, experiment in the environment and communicate their discoveries to those around them. Our Monday-Friday Nature Preschool infuses nature into all aspects of your child's early learning, while preparing them for school through inquiry-based learning and hands-on discovery in our natural world.

Rolling enrollment! Contact our Nature Preschool Director today to get on the list for fall. Learn more about what a Nature Preschool is at BerksNature.org/NaturePreschool, or schedule a visit with Nature Preschool Director Anne Muvdi at 610-372-4992 x115, or anne.muvdi@berksnature.org.



For more information, or to register for a program, visit www.BerksNature.org.

*Berks Nature Preschool is run by Berks Nature Education Programs, LLC.



Volunteer Spotlight

Risa Marmontello *Amity Township*

Background: With her degree in Secondary Education from Kutztown University, Risa worked for several years in that field, before devoting much of her life to being a stay-at-home mom—a decision that she says “afforded me the opportunity to work part-time as an education tutor and volunteer for environmental organization in Berks County.

Connection to Nature: “As a child, I spent a lot of time outdoors and took camping trips with my family,” Risa said. “As I grew older, my love of nature continued to expand through books and travel.” With a particular love of native plants and trees, one of Risa’s greatest joys is shopping for and cultivating plants. “Traveling through the United States and overseas with my family, I have been blessed to experience many marvels of nature, and would like to do as much as possible to preserve these wonders for future generations,” she said.

Volunteer service: Risa was asked to join Berks Nature (then Berks County Conservancy’s) Board of Directors in 2006. At the same time, she was appointed chair of the Environmental Committee, of which she’s continued to stay involved with for the past 13-years. She served as chair of the Berks Nature Board of Directors for two years, beginning in 2015, and has remained an active member of the Land Committee. Additionally, she serves as a Berks Nature Ambassador, and became a PA Master Naturalist in 2012. Outside of her work with Berks Nature, Risa spends

much of her time volunteering with Monocacy Hill Conservation Association, a non-profit volunteer community organization that assists Amity Township in maintaining and restoring Monocacy Hill Recreation Area. A founding member in 1998, she’s since served as President of the organization.

What keeps her coming back: “First, I love the mission of the organization (Berks Nature)— both the traditional mission of land preservation, and the newer mission of environmental education,” she said. “But I think the camaraderie of the staff and volunteers here is the most rewarding. They are all such interesting people and they have a real enthusiasm for nature. One of the perks that I enjoy is learning so much by just spending time with them.” After so many years with Berks Nature, Risa added, the staff and committee members have become a treasured part of her life, “a group of people who I admire very much, and with whom I have shared values and a commitment to preserve the natural world.”

What we’re saying about Risa: “Risa has been an important leader in many areas for Berks Nature,” Berks Nature President Kim Murphy said. “An important advocate for environmental education, a long-term member and chair of our environment committee, board member and former board chair- Risa is as comfortable and effective in the board room as she is pulling invasives on Neversink Mountain. We’ve been fortunate to benefit from her leadership and hope to for many years to come.”



Get involved in protecting your water!

Volunteer opportunities available in four different watershed associations.

Clean water. Without a doubt, it’s considered by most people to be a fundamental measure of environmental health. We rely on surface water and groundwater for our drinking water supplies, for irrigation of crops, for industrial processes, and for outdoor recreation. Monitoring and protecting the health of surface water and groundwater is important to all of us—and a fundamental part of Berks Nature’s mission. We rely on volunteers and people like you, who care about their water, to make up our four different watershed associations.

Interested in learning more about your watershed and what you can do to protect it?

Become a member, and/or volunteer with one of our watershed associations to meet like-minded people and work together to protect your local watershed. Volunteers from all walks of life welcome— a scientific background is not required! Among the many activities our watershed associations lead: stream clean-ups, water monitoring, tree plantings and more!

For more information on the Hay Creek Watershed, contact Sarah Chudnovsky at 610-372-4992 x104, or sarah.chudnovsky@berksnature.org. Those interested in getting involved in the Angelica, Maiden or Tulpehocken Creek watershed associations are asked to contact Michael Griffith at 610-372-4992 x108, or michael.griffith@berksnature.org.



- Angelica Creek Watershed Association
- Hay Creek Watershed Association
- Maiden Creek Watershed Association
- and Tulpehocken Creek Watershed Association



2018

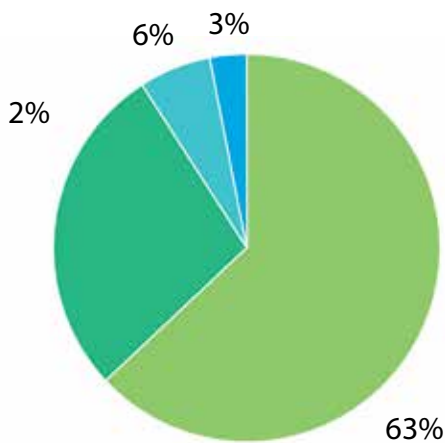
Financial Report

Berks Nature Revenues vs. Expenditures

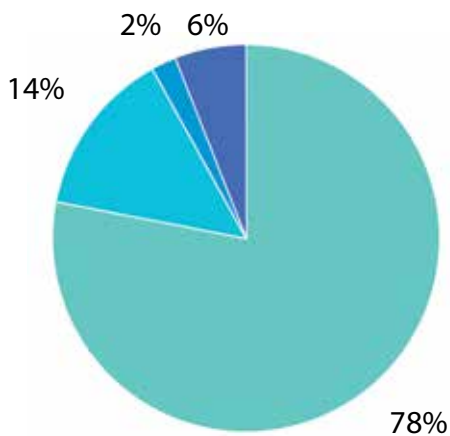
*Preliminary pre-audited figures taken from Berks Nature
December 31, 2018 financial statements*

Year Ending December 31, 2018

Total Revenues: \$2,083,128.58



- 63% Restricted Income (Grants/Contributions)
- 28% Conservation Easements
- 6% Unrestricted Contributions/Grants
- 3% Memberships



Total Expenditures: \$1,442,216.91

- 78% Program Services
- 14% Management & General
- 6% Investment Loss
- 2% Fundraising



Berks Nature List of 2018 Gifts & Grants

Berks Nature thanks you, its generous supporters, for your continued support and commitment. This listing was compiled from those gifts and grants received between January 1, 2018 and December 31, 2018. Every effort has been made to ensure that this list is complete and accurate. We apologize for any errors of omissions and would appreciate your comments or corrections at 610-372-4992 ext. 100 or info@berksnature.org.

\$5,000 +

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All or part of gift:

◆ Capital Campaign for The Nature Place

○ President's Nature Circle

🐾 Tails on the Trails Member

1 In memory of Dr. Constance Dent

2 In memory of Dr. Eugene A. Hildreth

3 In memory of Phyllis Webber Whitten

4 In memory of James Hartman

5 In memory of three great conservationists of the Oley Hills: Phoebe L. Hopkins; Ilse Morning and Wilhelm G.F. Roscher

6 In honor of Susan Coffey

Berks Nature Ambassadors

(as of 12/31/2018)

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Scot Case

Patricia Catucci

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Jan Gernsheimer

Sandra Grajewski

Jerry Griffith

Kathy Grim

Elizabeth Harris

James Hufford

Carl Kaucher

Risa Marmontello

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(○) Donors with this symbol are members of our President's Nature Circle. This Nature Circle involves an annual gift commitment of \$1,000 to our organization. Members of the President's Nature Circle enjoy all of the benefits of member-ship, and are invited to an exclusive President's Nature Circle event each year. Most importantly, the support enables us to remain dedicated to protecting open space, clean water, hiking & biking trails, and wildlife habitats, to ensure a balanced quality of life in Berks County.



Berks Nature is grateful for the support of the William Penn Foundation. They have helped to make our conservation projects and partnerships a great success.



Our dedicated 2019 Board and Committee volunteers generously provided time, energy and resources to Berks Nature. Thank you!

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We thank this special group of volunteers!



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575 St. Bernardine Street,
Reading, PA 19607



Non-Profit Org.
US Postage
PAID
Reading, PA
Permit No. 153

It Pays to be a Berks Nature Member!

Become a Berks Nature member today at the Family Level and receive a 10% discount on summer Eco-Camp fees, in addition to a 30% discount on many of our events and programs. (See more on page 4)



Join us for an upcoming event at The Nature Place!

Registration is quick and convenient through our online portal at BerksNature.org, or at the front desk inside The Nature Place lobby.

Become a Berks Nature member today to receive 30% off the cost of many of our programs. All events are held at The Nature Place unless otherwise specified. A full listing of Berks Nature events, as well as additional details on the events below, can be found under the events tab at BerksNature.org.

- April 27:** Kids Super Saturday. Ages 8-14. 10AM- 4PM, \$40/per child.
- May 1:** Wee Ones Class. For toddlers through age 5. 10AM. \$10/per family.
- May 25:** Little Nature Explorers. For ages 5-8. 9:30AM- Noon. \$25/per child.
- June 1:** Guided Earl Poole Hike. This event will be held at our Earl Poole Sanctuary. 2PM \$5/per person. Children under the age of 12 free.
- June 2:** Tails, Trails & Ales! Save the date for this dog-friendly day at The Nature Place! Bring your favorite furry friend for an afternoon of activities, all to the tune of live music on the lawn from the "Let's Dance" Big Band. Noon-3PM, with live music from 1-3PM. FREE.
- June 8:** SMART Family Fishing Day at Blue Marsh Lake. 10AM - Noon. FREE. Donations suggested.
- June 21:** Firefly Hike & Fire Pit. 8PM-9:30PM. \$10/per person or \$20/per family.
- July 13:** Family Bike Hike. 11AM- 2PM. \$15/per family.
- August 3:** Woodland Walk & Story. 1PM. \$7/per person or \$15/per family.

Proud to offer homeschool and scouting programs

Register your child for one of our upcoming scheduled homeschool sessions at The Nature Place! Have a group? We offer private classes to groups with programs tailor-made to your interests.

Looking for badge-earning opportunities for your scouting troop? We offer opportunities for scouts of all ages to earn badges and learn in nature at The Nature Place. View and register for upcoming scouting and homeschool programs at BerksNature.org, or contact Michael Griffith today to learn more: michael.griffith@berksnature.org or 610-372-4992 x108.

Let us host your birthday party or meeting!

Celebrate your child's birthday with one of our unique party packages- available to view at BerksNature.org.

Looking for space for your next meeting? Our state-of-the-art conference rooms and classrooms are available to rent. Learn more by contacting Dawn McDonough at dawn.mcdonough@berksnature.org, or 610-372-4992 x100.