



## Mehoopany Creek Watershed Association

PO Box 73 Mehoopany PA 18629

mehoopanycreek@yahoo.com

### Spring 2016 Newsletter

## **Please Join Us!**

### **Trout Day Fundraiser**

**April 16<sup>th</sup>, Forkston Four Corners 7 am til 1 pm**

### **Litter Pickup**

**April 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>; Meet at Henry Lott Parking Lot 9AM**

**Spring Liming - SGL57 TBA - watch our facebook page for info**

**For More Information Call Emily 570-833-5035**

*We hope you will join us for our Trout Day Fundraiser. Ray has made some very nice duck and bat houses. Bat houses are really helpful in improving bat habitat. Bats eat bugs. Please stop by, early or late for a snack, lunch, to renew your membership and chat with the members.*

*Remember to renew your wardrobe with new MCWA clothing!*

*The theme of our spring newsletter is more awareness of our watershed. Each article has been crafted to give you more insight into our watershed - the challenges, benefits, recreational opportunities and beauty. We hope you enjoy it and we'll see you soon!*

### **Another Bug In Our Woods**

By Marilyn Stark



**Eastern hemlock under attack.**

Many invasives are appearing on our landscape. An invasive can be shrubs, vines, grasses, flowers, trees, or insects. Invasive species compete with desirable plants for growing space, sunlight, nutrients, and water. They can disrupt an entire ecosystem. We have seen the impact of the gypsy moth caterpillar and the emerald ash beetle. Presently, of great concern is the decline of the eastern hemlock, our state tree so designated in 1931. The villain, the woolly adelgid beetle. This beetle first appeared in Virginia in 1951. Since then, it has decimated hemlocks from Virginia to Maine, and west to Tennessee.

The beetle punctures the hemlock needle to suck out nutrients. Trees die within 5-10 years. A diseased tree can be identified by white tuft like foam at the base of the needle. With the loss of the hemlocks, trees or plants that grow in its place do not provide comparable habitat or ecological function. Many breeding birds rely on conditions that the hemlock provides. It not only provides food and shelter for deer and other wildlife, but also provides protection from erosion along streams. The Fish and Wildlife Service found that Brook trout are 3x more likely to be found in small hemlock streams because hemlocks moderate stream chemistry and temperatures. There are treatments underway to protect the hemlock: one is chemical and one is biological.

It is vital to identify pest species and provide an integrated management plan to destroy or manage them. It is much better to deal with the problem early, rather than later, after it has really been established.

*Do You Know? April is designated as Invasive Plant, Pest, and Disease Awareness month.*

Jeff Mitchell, *Hiker Extraordinaire* regularly treks into the Mehoopany Creek Watershed, SGL 57. Here's an excerpt from one of his recent hikes.

Interested in more?

<https://endlessmountains.wordpress.com/>

### **A Hike to the Emerald Forest**

by Jeff Mitchell

Over ten years ago I hiked up Scouten Brook in SGL 57. I was pleasantly surprised by the beauty of this stream, as the water slid over red bedrock and tumbled down small cascades under a hemlock forest. This off-trail hike was only the beginning for me, the first of many beautiful places I would see during my explorations of SGL 57. This past weekend, I returned. And it was amazing.

I've spent little time in this area of the SGL 57. Recently, I've become intrigued by what might be there. Google Earth revealed a vast, deep green forest, even in winter. I suspected it might be a spruce and hemlock forest.

We followed an old grade along Scouten Brook as cascades danced far below over the deep red bedrock I remembered from years ago. Large boulders adorned the creek. The hemlock forest was not as verdant, dying from the woolly adelgid. The creek was beautiful and pristine as it flowed through a gorge of towering hardwood trees.

Easier hiking was provided by an old forest grade that gradually climbed the plateau. The hemlock and spruce forest that was the goal of this hike soon came into view. We left the old grade and climbed to this evergreen forest and were greeted with a massive rock overhang with a cave behind it. The rock was made of pebbly conglomerate. I reached the overhang by descending through the cave, where one hanging rock looked like it was about to fall. We sat

there to enjoy the scenery as spruce trees surrounded us. The best was yet to come.



**Incredible forests of spruce, hemlock, and moss. One of the most scenic forests in the state.**

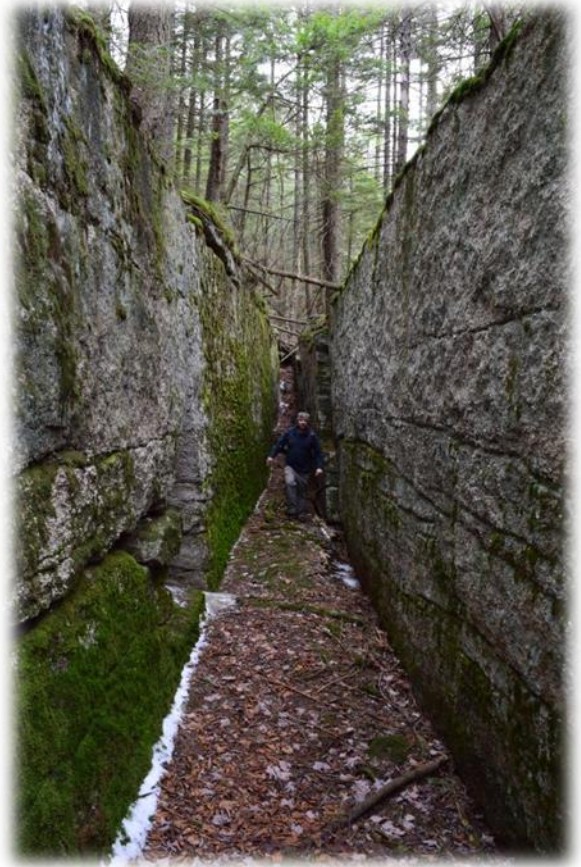
We left the overhang and came to the plateau rim to be immersed in an amazing forest of spruce, hemlock, and carpets of moss. It must be one of the most scenic forests in Pennsylvania. The greenery was simply incredible, invoking a forest from the Adirondacks or New England. Despite it being winter, when most forests are bare brown, this one was an endless green. We were awestruck. Carpets of moss spread through the forest, harboring countless spruce saplings. We could have been in the Pacific Northwest. Massive boulders comprised the forest floor, and in a few places, the separated boulders created long, straight chasms. Stunning. Moss and lichens covered the boulders. We pushed on through this sylvan wonderland. The cliff rim provided some views through the trees from the exposed boulders, as more caves and crevasses hid beneath our feet. The bedrock had separated, creating mazes of passageways and narrow, deep crevices that we had to be careful not to fall into.

As we made our way around the western edge of the forest, the clouds cleared, offering deep, blue skies and warm sunshine. A strong westerly

wind filled the spruce forest, as shafts of sunlight pierced the canopy to electrify the forest floor. It was a complete sense of wildness as the wonderful aroma of the spruce filled our lungs. Few people have ever seen this place. The rim featured more boulders and crevasses, and tangled, fallen spruce trees. We continued along the rim and soft carpets of moss. I saw a slight rise ahead of me and I climbed up to it. The spruce forest separated to reveal a beautiful view to the west, with vast plateaus, and the canyons of Mehoopany Creek, Stony Brook, and Red Brook. The view was untouched, with no sign of development. We were all impressed as we enjoyed the warm sun and blue skies. We knew we had found a special place. We weren't the first ones here, but few have ever seen what we saw. I imagined what the sunset must look like from here, it must be beautiful, I thought.

We hiked out to the road. Twilight soon came as we flushed some wild turkeys from the pine and hemlock trees. The dark, bare tree branches reached across the last light of the day. The air was warm and still, making it feel like April and not January. Darkness surrounded us as we completed our hike on the road. The rapids of the Mehoopany Creek filled the isolated valley, the air had the scent of

woodsmoke. An owl hooted in the distance. I slipped through the darkness, walking quickly along the road and startling deer in the woods. Constellations filled the clear sky, with Orion being the most vivid. I will return to this spectacular, special forest.



Exploring the chasms.

## Busy as a Beaver

By Kyle Ziegler

The saying goes “Busy as a Beaver,” but to truly appreciate what North America’s largest rodent is capable of, you must see their work for yourself. Beavers are nature’s engineers, falling trees and building dams across streams and rivers that last for years. In the process of doing so, they alter the landscape around them. Beavers, creating ponds where there was once a swift moving stream and providing a new habitat for plants and animals to utilize. It is also this industrial habit of beavers that leads to conflicts with people. Whether, it is the flooding of roads and property, or cutting down trees in peoples’ yards; these conflicts with people lead to the need for beavers

*Do you know?* The North Branch of the Susquehanna River has been selected as 2016 River of the Year announced by the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) and the Pennsylvania Organization of Waterways and Rivers (POWR). A \$10,000 Leadership Grant to help fund River of the Year activities will be awarded to the Endless Mountain Heritage Region and Susquehanna Greenways, the nominating organizations.

to be harvested to properly manage their populations, to limit possible problems.

As fall approaches, you can really begin to see evidence of where beavers are living. The shortening of days, puts their winter preparations into full swing. With the possibility of spending a

couple of months under the ice, they must have enough food stock piled to last them until the ice recedes. During the summer months, beavers will feed on a variety of roots and tubers found in the water, such as lily pad roots. However, for the long, cold winter, they will need branches and logs from trees that they cache underwater where they can access them if enough ice forms to block the beavers from going on land.



**Beaver Lodge, Mehoopany Creek Watershed.**

Beavers feed on the bark of these branches, with aspen, poplar and maple being their favorites, though they will feed on almost any type of tree if they have to. They need deep water to access these food caches when the winter locks the beaver under the ice. When beaver live in a lake or larger river this is not an issue, but in other areas they construct dams. These dams are generally made of sticks and mud, and are usually constructed at a narrow part in the watercourse. The largest known beaver dam in the world is in Wood Buffalo National Park in Alberta Canada and is 2,800 feet long and growing. As the beavers construct their dams, the water behind them begins to slow and deepen. It is in this deeper slow water where they will construct their lodge. The lodge will be made of mud and sticks, with the only entrances underwater. During the winter the exterior of the lodge will freeze, forming an almost impenetrable barrier, protecting the beaver from predators such as coyotes and bobcats.

***Do you know?***

- Once again, the EagleCam is operational overlooking a nest near Hanover, Pennsylvania. To watch a pair of bald eagles raise their young, go to the PA Game Commission website at [www.pgc.state.pa.us](http://www.pgc.state.pa.us).
- You can also visit DEP's website at [www.dep.pa.gov/falcon](http://www.dep.pa.gov/falcon) to view Harrisburg's pair of peregrine falcons that nest on the 15th floor ledge of the Rachel Carson State Building. The male falcon has used this nest site for 11 years; the female for 4 years.

Beavers will also dig bank dens in places where suitable or a combination of the two. The beavers that live in a lodge are referred to as a colony. A typical colony consists of four to eight beavers, being composed of an adult pair, two or three yearlings, two to four kits, and one or more two and a half year olds. Beavers never stop growing, and can live up to ten years in the wild and reach weights of over 70 pounds.

In Pennsylvania, beavers tend to breed between January and March, with the young being born in April and May. Litter size is usually about four beavers. When they hit the age of about two, they will disperse about five to six miles from their home colony and look for a place to build a lodge for themselves.

Bears, bobcats, coyotes, otters, and humans are the main predators of beavers. Beaver ponds tend to be magnets to all creatures. Aquatic and semi-aquatic plants and animals call a beaver pond home. You can easily find ducks, muskrats, mink, and otters in beaver ponds. Beaver ponds also attract land animals looking to make a meal out of a beaver, or any of the other animals that live in or around the beaver pond.

Beavers are one of the few creatures other than humans that will alter their surroundings to better suite themselves. In doing so, they can change part of a watercourse indefinitely. Love them or hate them, it is truly remarkable what a colony of beavers is capable of in the right habitat, given enough time. They can build a damn that will hold back a remarkable amount of water. In doing so, they create places for countless numbers of other creatures to live. So if you have the opportunity, take a walk around a beaver pond and explore the wonders that can be found here.

**Interested in more? Hardisky, Tom. Beaver Management in Pennsylvania. [www.pgc.state.pa.us](http://www.pgc.state.pa.us)**

Mehoopany Creek Watershed Association

President, Emily Krafjack

Vice President, Dennis Mingus

Treasurer, Dave Krafjack

Secretary, Marilyn Stark

<http://mehoopanycreek.org/>

Meetings: 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday Monthly

Except December.

7PM Forkston Twp Building

244 Bowman Hollow Road

