

The Pinchot Eagle

AUGUST 2026, ISSUE 54

[VOLUNTEER](#)

[EVENTS](#)

[GIVE NOW](#)

Betsy Leppo



how to be a friend to your local box turtles

By Nadia Payne and Betsy Leppo

Box turtles are a fan-favorite species of reptile in Pennsylvania. The woodland (or eastern) box turtle (*Terrapene carolina carolina*) is frequently spotted by PA residents as the turtles spend most of their life on land. Their size and colors make them an exciting species to find wandering around your lawn, crossing a road, or next to the trail on a hike. These endearing reptiles can be identified by their domed top shells, called the carapace, covered in orange to yellow patterns. Aside from their patterns, their body tends to range from brown to black.

Males and females can often be distinguished by the color of their eyes (females - brown, males - bright orange to red, juveniles - yellow). However, their eye color is quite variable, with some females sporting carmine red or amber eyes, and both sexes can have very pale eyes. Turtle scientists recently published a paper describing how the iris eye color of male woodland box turtles can change quickly between yellow and red (Carlson et al. 2020). More research is needed, but box turtles could use their eyes to communicate messages on reproductive or social status, as is also found in certain species of birds and fish. (continued on page 2)



Although box turtles are a charming animal to see, these turtles are under threat. Poaching and the illegal pet trade are directly diminishing box turtle populations. Other factors like road hits and predation also are contributing to their declining numbers. Fortunately, there are numerous actions that you can take to help protect box turtles.

Be aware of what you post online Sharing photos of box turtles to social media, community science platforms, and other public forums can unintentionally give away locations of turtles to poachers. To help obscure the location of the turtle, remove the location data from a photo. Also, cropping out or covering up distinct features of the landscape such as road signs or unique trees makes it harder to find the location of the turtle.



Help turtles cross the road If you spot a turtle trying to cross the road and it is safe to pull over, gently pick them up and place them in the direction they were heading. Always make sure you look out for traffic when helping the turtle cross.

Keep food to yourself Raccoons love to eat box turtle eggs. Securing food and garbage in proper containers, bringing pet food inside at night, and not feeding wildlife directly helps keep raccoon populations down, allowing box turtles to thrive.

Report box turtles to PARS PARS is the Pennsylvania Amphibian and Reptile Survey. This organization gathers information to help protect and conserve not only box turtles, but all of PA's reptiles and amphibians. Submitting a photo of a box turtle is quick and easy through the PARS email submission.

Create and protect habitat Box turtles live in forests and fields. They like to have shallow pools of water to cool off in and leaves and old stumps to hide and forage in. Females like to build their nests in dry sandy soil. Protecting these environments and creating them in your backyard can help boost their populations.



Educate yourself and others Spread the word on the issue affecting turtles! When people learn about turtle poaching and other threats to turtles, they can do more to help protect these radical reptiles. More information about what you can do to help turtles can be found at PARC's Every Turtle counts page. Plus, when sharing about turtles on social media, use the hashtag #EveryTurtleCounts to help spread awareness.



wavyleaf basketgrass

LET'S STOP THIS AGGRESSIVE INVADER

by Jim Hugar

In 2016, DCNR discovered wavyleaf basketgrass in Codorus State Park and later in Gifford Pinchot State Park. Its spread was later attributed to unknowing disc golfers moving to various parks and courses in southcentral Pennsylvania.

Much information is available online but in short, basketgrass spreads by sending out shoots and rooting along its stems. This causes it to blanket large areas and choke out natives. In the late summer and early fall it produces seeds that cling to clothing, animal fur, shoes which enables it to be easily spread.

Discussing basketgrass with Ben Mummert, Invasive Plant Ecologist with DCNR, Bureau of Forestry, he stressed the importance of knowing the extent of the problem. With this knowledge, DCNR can establish appropriate control measures and allocate resources to eradicate WLBG.

How can you help?

We strongly encourage you to join the [Basketgrass Bonanza](#). This is a state-sponsored survey event organized by the PA iMapInvasives Program. It invites natural resource professionals and the public to search for and map basketgrass. The organized survey and blitz period runs from August 1 through August 31. You can register for the event and find survey instructions on the [PA iMapInvasives Event Page](#).

Without our committed effort to identify and report this aggressive invasive, DCNR will not be able to reach a stated goal to eradicate wavyleaf basketgrass.

getting the hikers out of the mud

Trail Care Efforts Continue to Improve Lakeside Trail

by Jim Hugar

The Friends Trail Stewards Team met on June 9th to continue the work done in May on Lakeside Trail west of the trails exit from the Conewago Day Use Area.

Over a three-day period starting near the end of June, the combined efforts of the Park Staff, Friends Trail Stewards, Columbia Gas volunteers and the PA Outdoor Corps made major improvements to Lakeside Trail east of marker #45 (yurts and cottages in the Campground).

Parts of this section of trail is only 6 - 10 inches above the lakes normal level and the area is near dead flat. Due to the frequent wet conditions almost 30' of "trail creep" has evolved as hikers have attempted, mostly in vain, to avoid water and mud. As a result many native plants have been damaged or destroyed. This effort rehabilitated about 125 feet of trail.





THANK YOU!

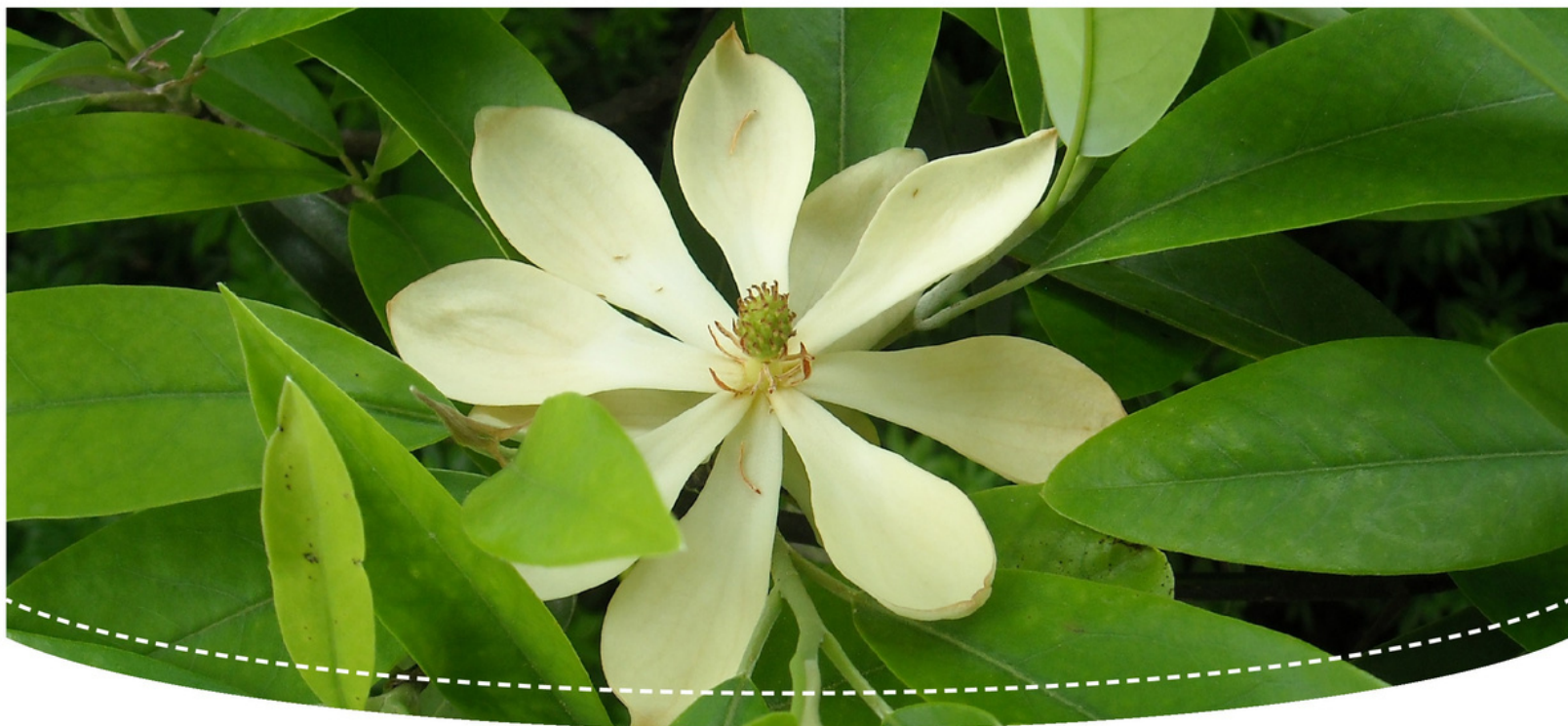
pa outdoor
corps
harrisburg
youth crew

by Paige Steffy

The Pennsylvania Outdoor Corps Harrisburg Youth Crew worked at Gifford Pinchot State Park for two weeks. They completed trail work on Lakeside Trail and assembled new picnic tables for use in the campground. Assistant Park

Manager Paige Steffy interviewed the crew to hear about their experience. Some of the crew's favorite parts of their time here at Pinchot were assembling the picnic tables, driving around the campground to see where the picnic tables were put to use, and moving stone for trail upgrades. They also enjoyed an environmental education day where they did a hike around the park and then went to see the operations of a PA Fish and Boat Commission Fish Hatchery in Huntsdale. All of the crew members said that this experience reinforced their desire to work in conservation.

Anyone interested in learning more about the Pennsylvania Outdoor Corps can find out more [here](#).



WATERSHED-FRIENDLY NATIVE TREE AND SHRUB SALE

Support this Master Watershed Stewards fundraiser

Add native beauty to your landscape and support the great work of Master Watershed Stewards.

Choose from 24 options available for pickup at 25 locations across the state in September and October. These trees and shrubs can provide privacy, foliage, shade, pollinator habitat, and beauty.

Your purchase supports the program's work in your region. That includes projects such as stream repair, tree plantings, youth education, and more.



Order by Tuesday, August 25!

extension.psu.edu/master-watershed-steward-native-tree-and-shrub-sale

Penn State College of Agricultural Sciences research and extension programs are funded in part by Pennsylvania counties, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

The Pennsylvania State University encourages qualified persons with disabilities to participate in its programs and activities. If you anticipate needing any type of accommodation or have questions about the physical access provided, please contact Penn State Extension at 1-877-345-0691 in advance of your participation or visit.

Please visit extension.psu.edu/alternate-format-request to request this publication in an alternative format accommodation due to a disability.

Penn State is an equal opportunity employer and is committed to providing employment opportunities to all qualified applicants without regard to race, color, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, disability, or protected veteran status.

UBR AGR 26-1366



**PennState
Extension**

how are we
doing?

CLICK [HERE](#) TO GIVE US YOUR THOUGHTS AND
SUGGESTIONS ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCE OF
PINCHOT STATE PARK



be a friend

Not yet a friend of Pinchot?
Make a yearly gift of as
little as \$15 per year and
support the park and get
this newsletter delivered to
your inbox regularly! Find
out more [here](#)!

advisory board

Jim Hugar, Chair
Betsy Leppo, Co-chair
Tammy Klunk, Treasurer
Denny Daugherty, Secretary
Alicia Bracken, Social Media and Website
Coordinator
Joyce Gayman, Membership and Volunteer
Coordinator
Phyllis Crooks, Firewood Sales Coordinator

*Two board positions are currently vacant -
please contact us for more information about
these board opportunities.

Newsletter editor: Abby Leese

Merch Sale



Want to help support the park?

Stop by the campground or park office
to get your official Pinchot gear!

All proceeds benefit Gifford Pinchot. Thank you!

YOUTH & ADULT T-SHIRTS \$20

LONG SLEEVE HOODIES \$30

HOODED SWEATSHIRTS \$35

TOTE BAGS, BALL CAPS, BEANIES \$15

PA PASSPORT \$13

SOUVENIR PATCH \$8

STICKERS & MAGNETS \$4

BANDANAS, DOG TAGS & HIKING MEDALLIONS \$5

****CASH OR CHECK ONLY****

Please make checks out to PPFF.

Friends of Pinchot members receive Adult and Youth T-shirts at a
discounted rate of \$16.



Stop by the Dillsburg Farmers' Market
on August 15 from 8-12pm to grab new
Pinchot merch!

be in touch



<https://www.facebook.com/FriendsofPinchot>
(717) 432-5011

friendsofpinchot@gmail.com

friendsofpinchot.org

2200 Rosstown Road,

Lewisberry, PA 17339, United States