



**President's Pen:**

**View from the Stream Bank**

It has been a busy spring and early summer for the DCVA!

In March, Alan Samel's Stream Watch event drew the largest number of participants ever to the sampling of macroinvertebrate life in Darby Creek. I know Alan will welcome as many individuals, or more, at the 'stream bug' identification workshop to be held in the fall.

The heavy rains that came before and during the weekend of April 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> did not stop the intrepid captains of the Darby Creek Clean-up from pulling off a highly successful event. Thanks to the inspiration and months of planning by Clean-up Chairs Jan and John Haigis, this annual event continues to build public awareness of the watershed and engage more and more interest among its residents in stewardship activities.

Thanks to the dedicated and persistent leadership of Bill Frasch, the DCVA finally kicked off the Technical Assistance Grant project, contracting with Mary Rooney, P.E. and associates to oversee and evaluate for the public the clean-up of the Clearview and Folcroft Superfund sites. We are going to miss

*--Continued on Page 8*

**Inside This Issue:**

Creekside Care .....	2
Replant Riparian Forests .....	3
Summer Education Program.....	3
TAG Award Update.....	3
Spring Cleanup Sponsors .....	4
Darby-Cobbs Partnership News.....	5
StreamWatch News .....	6
Cricker's Corner .....	9
Membership Form .....	9
Canoe Race Registration.....	Insert

Mark Your Calendar:

Governor Printz Canoe Challenge to be Held September 16

**Paddling for Preservation**

The Governor Printz Canoe Challenge has a cause. Volunteers can take the challenge. Supporters can take the challenge. Sponsors can take the challenge.

Mark the date. It is: Saturday, September 16, 2006. Recreation paddlers will start about 8 a.m. Competition classes will start at 9:30 a.m. The canoes go in the water at the Heinz National Wildlife Refuge and come out at Governor Printz Park. Each canoe has two paddlers, but an individual may enter. You should call and discuss your situation before entering. Refreshments will be available at the end for participants. Awards and other activities will follow.

The registration form is inserted into this newsletter. Note that the deadline to register is September 2, 2006. The committee welcomes ideas and offers of help. Visit DCVA's website at [www.dcva.org](http://www.dcva.org), or call Bob Shaner, Chair, at 610 449-7297.

**Earth Day Deluge  
Can't Stop DCVA  
2006 Cleanup**

Despite some torrential rainfall during parts of the day and the night before, the 22<sup>nd</sup> annual Darby Creek Valley Association Cleanup was held on Earth Day April 22, 2006, and, as DCVA President Robin Mann quipped, "The diehards were out in force!" Although some sites started a little later than usual and a few Captains opted to clean their portion of the Darby-Cobbs watershed a few days early or a week later because of the weather, all 23 sites were given a spring cleaning by the stalwart DCVA members and other hardy volunteers. (As is often the case, the Cleanup at Heinz Wildlife Refuge in Tinicum was done on April 15 because of tide considerations.) When the 6 dumpsters were picked up and weighed the following Monday, more than 16 tons of trash, debris, and objects, man made and

*--Continued on Page 4*

**Greenway Steering  
Committee Gets  
Underway;  
Public Meeting To Be  
Held September 26**

The central goal identified in the DCVA's Darby Creek Watershed Conservation Plan – the establishment of a Darby Creek Greenway – is one major step closer to becoming a reality. The Delaware County Planning Department convened the first meeting of the Darby Creek Greenway Steering Committee on June 16, 2006, and has set the date for the first public meeting: Tuesday, September 26, 2006, 7 p.m., at the Springfield Township Municipal Building.

Delaware County intends the Darby Creek Greenway Plan to serve as a key ingredient of an update of the 1978 County Open Space, Parks and

*--Continued on Page 6*

## CREEKSIDE CARE

By Kathryn Goddard

*Associate Professor of Biology and Environmental Studies, Ursinus College, Collegeville, PA.*

The children in our neighborhood have the great privilege of playing in a small stream and two tiny ponds that are part of the headwaters of the Darby Creek. They watch goslings hatch. They count painted turtles piled one atop the other to sun themselves. They were astonished by a 2 foot American eel that spent last summer in a rocky pool in the creek before migrating downstream and out to sea to spawn. Children who live near the Darby Creek and its tributaries throughout the watershed have a great opportunity for fun and for learning when they visit the creek. The adults of the community can do much to preserve and restore the Darby Creek for their own children and the children downstream from them.

There are many practices that we can adopt to help to improve the creek and its tributaries for humans and aquatic animals. Citizens owning property along the creek can make a particularly positive impact. There are physical, biological, and chemical factors to which we should turn our attention.

**Physical Factors.** - Visitors to the creek and homeowners can quickly amend the physical environment. If we take a bag along with us to the creek, we can fill it with plastic bottles to be recycled and with assorted trash. The trash washes downstream with storms and accumulates more and more with every creek mile.

Old tires and other things that will hold water should be taken away; they are perfect places for mosquitoes to breed; mosquitoes do not breed well in the flowing water of the creek, but they breed very well in standing water. Any trash such as old appliances that can leak oil or paint obviously contain harmful chemicals and should be removed from the creek and the creek bed. Old fishing line should be taken away; turtles and birds cannot escape once entangled in it. Small bare feet somehow find discarded fish hooks; we must keep track of how many fishhooks we take to the creek,

and take them home with us!

Homeowners and hikers can also observe changes in the streambed that need attention. A formerly rocky stream bed that is becoming filled with sediment such that the rocks are covered with fine silt suggests that harmful erosion is occurring. The cause of the erosion, locally or upstream, should be investigated. As the rocks become covered with sediment, the insects that dwell on the rocks will disappear locally, and then the fish that feed upon them will disappear. In addition, silt can cover and kill fish eggs. Muddy water is not good for the aquatic plants in which young fish hide from predators. It is also tough on the adult fish—muddy water clouds their vision and clogs their gills. See the article on page 3 in this issue of "The Valley" by Clyde Hunt on ways to stop stream bank erosion.

**Biological Factors.** - Interesting biological factors can also be considered. When species of animals or plants are introduced to a new area, the diseases from which they suffer and the animals that eat them are usually left behind in their homeland; therefore, some introduced species grow out of control in the geographical areas to which they are introduced. Few people would even consider setting a foreign fish free in our watershed. Yet it has happened nearby; an Asian fish called the northern snakehead appears to have been released in more than one area (see the Maryland Department of Natural Resources website at <http://www.dnr.state.md.us>). It threatens native fish in Maryland in that it can out compete them for food, and it also uses the native fish for food.

Introduced plants can also be an issue; the purple loosestrife is a beautiful meadow plant, but it does not belong in Pennsylvania (see the US Department of Agriculture website at <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/ppq/weeds>). Many nurseries and arboreta sell plants that are native to Pennsylvania. These plants are cost effective in that they are appropriate for our soil and climate and are less likely to die and need to be replaced than exotic plants. Some of them are great garden plants for other reasons—the winterberry, for example, provides vital winter food for bluebirds and other songbirds

(see the PA Department of Environmental Protection website elibrary at <http://www.dep.state.pa.us>).

**Chemical Factors.** - We should also be cautious of the chemicals that we use in our gardens and on our lawns, whether we live on the creek or at some distance from it. When it rains, chemicals wash directly into the creek from our properties, or into storm drains that empty into the creek. Just reading the labels on bags of well known herbicides reveals that they are harmful to fish, frogs, salamanders and toads. Insecticides that are designed to kill lawn and garden insects do not discriminate—when they wash into the creek, they kill the insects that are eaten by fish, including trout. Lawn and garden fertilizer is also an effective fertilizer for freshwater algae; these seaweed-like plants are not good food for many aquatic animals, yet they quickly use the fertilizer and outgrow more useful plants. Fish and turtles that eat plants prefer the plants with stems and leaves, the ones we call flowering plants, both the underwater varieties and the ones that emerge from the water to form wetlands. All of these flowering plants provide better cover for young fish, turtles, insects, toads, frogs and ducklings than the algae. The flowering plants are more attractive in appearance, and their roots help to stabilize the streambed and keep the water clean. In addition, algae can coat the surface of the water and block sunlight to other plants. They tend to form mats on the surface that have foul odors. Bacteria use up the oxygen in the water to decompose dead algae; oxygen deprivation can lead to fish kills (see the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency website at [www.epa.gov/watertrain](http://www.epa.gov/watertrain))

It has long been known that certain chemicals are lethal in high concentration. Research has now shown that some of these same chemicals, such as those in oil, some pesticides and some herbicides are harmful in very low doses. The growth and development of young fish, frogs, and other organisms can go astray due to exposure to these materials (see e.g. "When Smoke Ran Like Water" 2002, by Devra L. Davis published by Basic Books). Reduced

--Continued on Page 8

## Replant Riparian Forests

By Clyde Hunt

When settlers first landed on the eastern shores of North America, it seemed as if the forests were endless. It was even said that squirrels could travel eastward to the Mississippi River from tree to tree without ever having to come down to the ground.

In those days most all streams flowed through forests, and trees protected most shorelines of lakes and the banks of streams. Watersheds protected by forests are still found to have high quality water. As the settlers cleared away the trees for agriculture and communities, our streams and lakes were no longer shaded bands of trees; the banks eroded, and rivers and creeks ran murky with silt and sediments.

Grass instead of trees doesn't seem to do the job. During the past 60 years America's rivers have undergone further deterioration from storm water and over flows from inadequate sewer systems. Many streams are now unfit for normal use because of pollutants, contamination by nutrients and animal wastes from farmlands and urbanization.

We work to restore a band of trees along many of our waterways. Tree roots will anchor streambanks, absorb nutrients and pollutants and trap sediment which overflows into wetlands and onto floodplains. These streamside forest buffers are valuable: (1) They filter out sediment and suspended solids. (2) They utilize excess nutrients and deactivate pollutants and contaminants. (3) Surface runoff that passes over forest litter then flows into the porous forest soils emerges as cleaner, cooler and better quality water. (4) More species of aquatic insects are present in waters passing through riparian buffer zones. (5) Streamside forests provide energy sources for aquatic life and store nutrients to be passed up food chains.

So why wait for tree seedlings to get started along the streams? Please don't mow young trees off with the grass before those masses of tiny tree roots can tie up the soil particles. Let them suck up the nutrients before these nutrients can seep into the waters and cause troubles all the way downstream.

## Yeadon Comes Alive As Elementary Students Explore their Community's Heritage and their Watershed Address: Blunston Run

*"What a wonderful opportunity for students to learn about their community and to learn how and what we can do together to preserve and protect our environment."*

*--Kate Werner, Teacher for the program in the Darby Creek Watershed*

Nine elementary school students from Bell Avenue School set out on a week's study to learn about their community. Co-sponsored by the Borough of Yeadon, the William Penn School District and the DCVA, the program focused on the theme of DCVA's environmental education program "A Sense of Place, Knowing Home."

Field trips to the John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge at Tinicum, John Bartram's Garden and the Philadelphia Water Department's Southeast Water Pollution Control Plant offered an additional dimension to the program.

Students met with Peter Brusco, Yeadon Borough Manager, who explained the borough's responsibility and the responsibility of all residents to protect and enhance the quality of life within the community. To meet with the Borough Manager in Borough Council's chamber was a unique experience for 9 and 10 year olds.

"Fishing" for critters in local Blunston Run with Dr. Kathy Doms and students from Ursinus College was a real "hands-on" experience for the

younger set to learn ways to evaluate water quality. Clyde Hunt, DCVA's forester, helped students explore the value and variety of the treescape of their neighborhood, setting the stage for the "expansion" of the school's treescape in the coming year.

David Young, Andrew Brazington and Elmore Hunter shared "Treasures from the Past" about Yeadon and their vision for the future. A tour of historic Yeadon and the role individuals played over time to contribute to the life and growth of Yeadon was the last activity for a busy week.

It was time to write thank you notes and to brainstorm with Kate Werner, their teacher, about ways to "spread the word" with fellow students and their teachers and their parents in the coming year. Bell Avenue School will be the "Environmental School" in the district next year! A great opportunity for everyone to act locally, we can make a difference.

Our thanks to so many people who helped, especially Carolyn Laws who helped with organization and planning.

### DCVA TAG Award Update

The DCVA was awarded a US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Technical Assistance Grant (TAG) for the Lower Darby Creek Superfund site on May 5, 2005. The 3 year grant runs from April, 2005, to April, 2008. The EPA will provide \$50,000 (80%) and DCVA will provide a \$12,500 (20%) match with in kind services and actual expenses.

On May 7, 2006, DCVA signed a Technical Advisor Contract with EnviroAce of Allentown, Pennsylvania. EnviroAce will provide the services of technical advice and assist in the review and analysis of the EPA combined risk assessment studies and remedial activities of the Lower Darby Creek Superfund Site. It is a 3 year contract.

Information is available on the web at <http://epa.gov/reg3hwmd/npl/PASFN0305521>.

## Successful Cleanup Continued from Page 1:

natural, had been removed from the various Darby-Cobbs waterways.

We had less tonnage than last year's 22 plus tons because more trash in bags was hauled away by local municipal crews on Monday and because every year the Creek gets a little cleaner through our efforts and through various DCVA and other municipal reminders to keep trash out of streams and storm drains. Another reason for the reduced amount was due to the generosity of Darby Captain Dave Bannon, who hauled much of the metals and glass retrieved from his cleanup site (Powell Park and upstream to the 1904 Trolley Bridge) directly to a recycling collection company. He has offered to use his truck to pick up recyclables from all of our sites for our 2007 Cleanup, if we wish. Site Captains would need to separate the recyclables and leave them beside their dumpster or in a separate pile from the bags and debris collected for municipal pickup after the Cleanup.



Results of clean up shown under the Blue Route at Darby Road and Ithan Creek in Bryn Mawr. From left, Alan and Jan Marie Rushforth, Bryn Mawr, and Adrian Courtenay, London, England

### Brief DCVA Cleanup History

DCVA has come a long way since 1984, the year of its inception, and since the first DCVA Cleanup held in April 1984 to coincide with Earth Day celebrations. For many years the Cleanup was run by DCVA Board member and (now retired) Postmaster of Darby Borough, Bob Dougherty. His able leadership and boundless energy, enthusiasm and connections with a variety of local and county organizations gave momentum to the spring cleanup idea. He also inspired

--Continued on Page 8

Note from Jan and John Haigis, Cleanup Chairs

## A Thank-You to Our Volunteers and to Our Sponsors

A BIG thank- you to all of our intrepid Captains and volunteers who were undaunted by rain and mud, yet who safely hauled and cleaned and groomed our wonderful watershed in the wet weather, that we needed desperately but wished had come on a different day!

This project could not happen every year without the efforts of each one of you. Please know how much your hard work is appreciated and how much your input and suggestions are always welcome. We hope that you had enough fun to want to join DCVA again in April 2007! Meanwhile have a great summer and enjoy the creeks you have helped to clean!

Listed below are the companies, organizations and individuals who provided goods, services or money to sponsor the 2006 Cleanup of the Darby Creek Watershed. We thank them profoundly for their support and encourage our members and volunteers to use their services and be supportive of them in return for their generosity to us and our ongoing work.

### DCVA Thanks our 2006 Cleanup Sponsors and Friends

Brandywine Conference & Visitors Bureau  
Benett's Men's Store, Darby  
Borough of Lansdowne  
BFI Waste Services, King of Prussia  
Charlotte's Restaurant, Newtown Square  
Cleaver Cable Construction, Inc., Glenolden  
Country Squire Diner, Broomall  
Danny's Hamburgers, Folcroft  
Darby Borough Community Development Corp.  
Darby Township Highway Dept.  
Delaware County Community Service Court  
Delaware County Conservation District  
Delaware County Solid Waste Authority  
Doyle's Deli and Grille, Lansdowne  
Eastern DelCo Council of Governments (COG)  
Hanne's, Havertown  
Haverford Township Civic Council  
Jack Clark, Inc. Springfield  
J&K Trash Removal, Gradyville  
Jacquette's Bakery, Marple  
John and Jan Haigis / www.darbyhistory.com  
John J. Blosenski & Sons, Glen Riddle  
John M. Bergin, General Contractor, Secane  
Lloyd's Lithographing Company, Yeadon  
Luigi and Giovanni Catering, Newtown Square  
Malz Brothers Hardware, Sharon Hill  
McDonalds Restaurant, Darby  
Nancy Bonsall Shultz, Darby Bonsall Settlers (1683)  
Newtown Square Pizza

--Continued on Page 8

## Darby-Cobbs Watershed Partnership Meets

By Khiet Luong

On Tuesday, May 9, representatives from more than 12 organizations arrived at the Cobbs-Creek Community Environmental Education Center to reconvene the Darby-Cobbs Watershed partnership. Along with the DCWP's founding members (the Inter Department, Valley Association County Planning the Pennsylvania Council), the room new faces and representatives spoke enthusiastically about their current projects and eagerness to work more collaboratively. The founder of the CCCEEC, Ms. Carole Williams Green, and its current executive director, Jay Pennie, opened the meeting with a formal welcome to the center, and the meeting was facilitated by Khiet Luong from PEC. In the upcoming months, the partnership will look to convene more stakeholders to determine next steps. Please contact Khiet Luong at 215 592 7020 x107 or [kluong@pecpa.org](mailto:kluong@pecpa.org) for more information and to get involved!

*"Working in partnership with others who have goals that supplement and support your own is part of working smart. That should be in peoples' minds as they participate in a watershed partnership." – David Burke, PA DEP, spoken at the Darby-Cobbs Reconvening Meeting*

Philadelphia Water Darby-Creek Commission, and Environmental was filled with ideas. Representatives about organizations are the Darby Creek and expressed

## Backyard Stream Buffer Resources

- **Forest Buffer Toolkit: Replanting Pennsylvania's Streamsides.** This toolkit provides information for planning, design, establishment and maintenance of a streamside forest buffer. View the toolkit at [www.dep.state.pa.us/dep/deputate/watermgt/wc/sub-jects/StreamReLeaf/tkit\\_TOC.pdf](http://www.dep.state.pa.us/dep/deputate/watermgt/wc/sub-jects/StreamReLeaf/tkit_TOC.pdf)
- **Riparian Buffer Systems** is a series of 10 fact sheets that includes plant lists, maintenance, and benefits and costs of a buffer. Visit [www.riparianbuffers.umd.edu/](http://www.riparianbuffers.umd.edu/)
- **Invasive Plants in Pennsylvania** is a brochure that describes the characteristics and impacts of invasive plants and provides tips to minimize their impact. Call PA DCNR-Ecological Services at 717 787-3444.
- **Rain Gardens.** The Virginia Department of Forestry has a web page on rain gardens: [http://www.dof.state.va.us/rfb/riparian/rain\\_gardens](http://www.dof.state.va.us/rfb/riparian/rain_gardens)
- **Native Plants.** A list of Garden Centers and Nurseries that carry native plants can be found in the "resources" section at [www.envirolandscaping.org](http://www.envirolandscaping.org).

## Municipal News

**Clifton Heights:** A parcel of vacant land along Darby Creek in Clifton Heights has been obtained by Delaware County. The 1 and 1/2 acre parcel located near Kent Park will be preserved as open space as part of the county's Greenway plan.

**Tinicum:** The Lazaretto property has become controversial. The township is planning to build a new firehouse on about half of the property. The National Park Service, the Delaware County Planning Commission, and historical preservation organizations are opposed to the firehouse because they worry that the historical integrity of the site will be compromised. The property is the oldest surviving immigration station hospital in the U.S. Ships and their cargo were inspected for disease at the hospital before traveling along to Philadelphia.

**Haverford Township:** It looks as if the Haverford State Hospital property issue will finally be resolved. New plans preserve more open space and provide additional recreational opportunities. The development will encompass 38.2 acres and contain 198 age-restricted condominiums and 100 age-targeted carriage homes. Building is expected to begin in the spring of 2009.

## Cradle of Birding Wildlife & Conservation Festival to Be Held at Heinz Wildlife Refuge

On the same day as DCVA's Canoe Challenge (Saturday, September 16), the Friends of the Heinz Refuge (FOHR) will hold the 3rd annual Cradle of Birding Wildlife & Conservation Festival. A full day of fun is being planned; DCVA members may want to return to the Refuge after the canoe race to participate in the events.

The festival will feature writer and photographer Kevin Karlson, author of *The Shorebird Guide* and *Birds of the Arctic Tundra*. His keynote program will include a photography and natural history lecture followed by a book signing.

Also of interest is the 6th annual FOHR Photography Contest. The winners will receive their awards during the Festival at 1 p.m. The actual deadline for entry, however, is August 26 at 3 p.m.; all entries must be delivered to the Cusano Environmental Education Center (NOT mailed.) Images may be of any nature subject from any location.

For more information about the Festival and for complete rules about the photography contest visit [www.fws.gov/northeast/heinz](http://www.fws.gov/northeast/heinz).

## Miscellany

- Those of you who are members of the Sierra Club know that our president Robin Mann has been elected to the Sierra Club National Board of Directors. Information about her activities is in the latest Pennsylvania Chapter publication **TheSylvanian**. Congratulations, Robin!
- Our own troubadours Jan and John Haigis have compiled a booklet of songs entitled "Songs of Storm-Water Management." The collection contains 13 pages of songs with environmental themes—"new words to familiar tunes." Check the DCVA website for more information.
- Speaking of the website, remember to go there for copies of past newsletters and for information about current activities: [www.dcva.org](http://www.dcva.org).

## Stream Watch Sampling Held March 25 Identification Workshop Will Be October 15

By Alan Samel

The first part of the stream-watch program involves wading into the creek and taking samples of the critters that live in the stream. On March 25, a small army of volunteers took samples from four locations: Bartram Park in Darby, along Darby Creek Road in Havertown, Skunk Hollow in Radnor, and the Brandywine Conservancy. Two samples were taken from each site for a total of eight samples. Those critters were placed in preservative for later identification.



So now we need to identify what we have. The identification part involves separating the bugs from the crud; the leaves, twigs, and mud that are in the sample bottles. Once the bugs are separated, they are identified and classified as being sensitive or non-sensitive to pollutants. In combination with water quality measurements taken the day of sampling, we can make an estimation of the water quality of the stream at that sampling site.

Sounds hard, doesn't it? Sounds too technical, doesn't it? Nah! It is a lot of work and it is time consuming. But it is not hard and you do not have to be the next coming of Rachel Carson to help out! We Need You!! On October 15, we will have our third annual insect identification at the Peace Center at the Springfield Friends Meeting. The workshop will be from approximately 9:00 to 3:00. Actually, consider it more of an open house; come when you can and help where you can. Our goal is to process the 2006 samples. We will also have opportunities to discuss what we did March 25 (bug collections, remember?), what the information we gather means, what can we do with it, etc. Best of all, you not only get to learn more about Darby Creek, you get to meet people with a common interest, a clean Darby Creek that can be enjoyed by all! If you are interested in being a part of the workshop, please call me at (610) 446-1658 or e-mail me at [alan.samel@verizon.net](mailto:alan.samel@verizon.net).

## Greenway Steering Committee

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Recreation Plan that the County is conducting. The Darby Creek Greenway Plan will serve as a pilot project, with a second greenway plan to be developed for the remainder of the County. At the Steering Committee meeting, the County introduced two planning consultants that have been hired to guide the planning process: Phil Hunsberger and Bob Kriebel of Urban Research and Development Corporation (URDC).

As shared with the Steering Committee, greenways can take many forms and serve multiple purposes. They can be established along creeks and streams, along old rail corridors, or as corridors linking open spaces. Greenways may include recreational trails and trails linking open spaces; they may also include privately owned land held in conservation, that does not offer public access. Karen Holm, head of Delaware County's Planning Department, underscored the value of greenways to communities in providing linkages between riparian areas and other open spaces. For the Darby Creek, promoting the restoration and protection of areas along its banks and stream valleys is seen as critical to improving the creek's water quality.

For the development of the Greenway, Darby Creek will be divided into segments for detailed study and planning. Updating the 1987 Darby Creek Stream Valley Park Master Plan will serve as a pilot planning effort.

DCVA is represented on the Steering Committee by John Furth and Robin Mann. The purpose of the public meetings is to gather specific input, knowledge of the watershed's features, and recommendations. Mark your calendar now for the September 26th meeting. DCVA has a great opportunity to promote broad attendance and participation in the meetings and cultivate widespread support and interest in the Greenway. Watch DCVA's website, [www.dcva.org](http://www.dcva.org), for more information. If you have questions, contact Robin Mann, at [robinmann@earthlink.net](mailto:robinmann@earthlink.net) or 610-527-4598.

## Friends of the Swedish Cabin Picnic To Be August 19

The Midsommars Dag Picnic sponsored by the Friends of the Swedish Cabin will be held Saturday, August 19, 2006 at 2 p.m. (raindate Sunday August 20). Hot dogs, burgers and beverages will be provided. Attendees are asked to bring a salad, appetizer or dessert and lawn chairs. Guests are welcome. Call 610 623-1650 if you plan to attend.

## Delaware County Public Transportation Map and Guide a Must as Gas Prices Increase

Prepared by the Delaware County Planning Department, copies of the Delaware County Public Transportation Map and Guide are available from the Department. Call 610 891-5200 to obtain your copy with information about train, bus, and trolley routes and schedules. Township and borough offices also have copies.

## Darby Creek Stories

### My Turtle Story By Grace Wheeler

Darby Creek has a lot going on in it, and living in it, that is not often seen. I am fortunate to live along the upper reaches of the Darby Creek, on a knoll about 220 feet above it. About 6 AM one day, I went out to see what the rather fearsome storms of the previous night had done to the level of the Creek, and to check for any damage around the house. I noticed that some flowerpots with seedlings had been overturned. Setting them upright, I glanced a few feet away. There on a patch of grass a large gray-green oval caught my eye. It was a large snapping turtle, its reptilian head poking out from a 12" shell. It seemed to be just sitting there. Should it be returned to the Creek? Would it bite? I wondered if I could carry it down the steep garden steps, in a nightgown, without slipping. Who could give advice at that early hour?

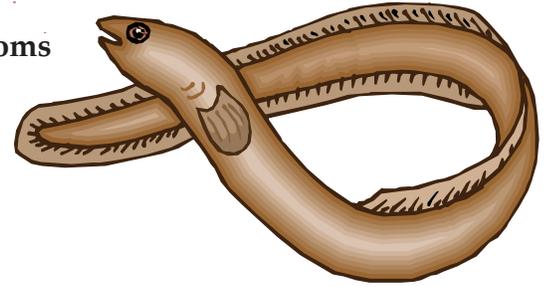
And then, the turtle began to give some answers. It raised itself up a bit, and a white, round egg - the size of a large marble - dropped from the rear end. It was only the first of many eggs to come. Everyone in the household came to watch, quietly, with "delivery room" respect. Pictures were taken before the children hurried off to school. She - for now the sex was clear - laid 26 eggs in the next hour. Then, after a pause, she raised herself up and, awkwardly using her hind legs, carefully covered the hole.

It was now 7 AM, late enough to call for information to Prof. Kathryn Goddard-Doms of Ursinus College. Kathy and I are both active in the Darby Creek Valley Association. Kathy reported this was the time of year and time of day that turtles laid their eggs, frequently far from the Creek itself, in places where the eggs will not get wet. Nothing needed to be done. The lawn could be mowed over the site of the "delivery room." The eggs would hatch 9 to 18 weeks hence and would need no assistance to find their way to the Creek. It might take them some time, but they emerge with enough yolk in their bellies to keep them alive for a few weeks before they begin to eat.

The mother would return to the Creek on her own. Sure enough, after replacing the dirt, she lumbered across the lawn to the garden steps. A civilized turtle, this one - not going cross-country through the uncultivated underbrush of brambles and honeysuckle. She went right down the steps, without losing her balance and turning upside-down, though sometimes it looked as if she would. And back to the water, just where a swale drains the flood-plain into the Creek.

Now we must wait for the next chapter. Will all the eggs hatch? Baby turtles are snacks for raccoons, crows, water snakes, and large fish. Will they all make it to the Creek? How can we keep a watch to see what happens, around the beginning of August through to the beginning of October? We'll try to report the next chapter when it happens.

### Harrison By Kate Doms



Harrison, age 5, was delighted to catch his first fish. It was a little sunfish, and he immediately let it go. It was a special day for him his mom told me. It was an honor to be with Harrison when he caught his first fish in the small tributary of Darby Creek near our house. His second fish brought a bit more of a surprise. As he reeled in a second small sunny, his mother and I saw a two foot long silvery gray creature, shaped like a snake, but thicker. It seemed to be trying to catch the sunfish, and stayed at the surface long enough for us to get a good, long look at it. Harrison's mother gasped, "What is that?! Is it an eel?" I was glad that she said it, because that is what I thought it was also, but I could not believe my eyes.

I should not have been surprised, but I was...I was surprised because that eel had made an amazing journey. Eels are born in the Sargasso Sea (Sea of Little Grapes), an area of the mid-Atlantic populated by Sargassum, a seaweed. Christopher Columbus named it the Sea of Little Grapes because Sargassum has little air-filled sacs that look like little yellow grapes. Eels travel from the Sargasso Sea toward the shore. The green eels that are caught along the coast are young eels traveling toward freshwater rivers. Eels live in streams and rivers for 12-15 years before they return to the sea to spawn and die. The larger eels that come far up streams are usually females whereas the males stay closer to the coast. Our eel was probably a female.

She was born far out in the Atlantic Ocean, swam west to North America, swam up the Delaware Bay, swam up the Delaware River to the Darby Creek, and swam up the Darby Creek and into our little tributary of the Darby Creek.

She stayed all summer, and learned to slither up over the wet rocks in the middle of the creek to get the pieces of shrimp that we threw to her. Thanks to her appetite for shrimp, we were able to get her to do this little trick many times throughout the summer so that other children and adults in the neighborhood had the opportunity to see her.

After one great August storm, she was gone. She probably felt the instinct to return to the sea to reproduce. Most likely she caught the surge of water that accompanied the storm and used it to get as far as she could downstream. To reach the ocean she had to swim through rocky shallows in the stream, over dams and past discarded shopping carts, past tempting baited fish hooks, under huge barges and container ships, past hungry sharks, and around sweeping fishnets. What a journey! I like to think that she was successful in her trek all the way from the Darby to the Sargasso Sea.

## Cleanup Sponsors:

—Continued from Page 4

Newtown Township Republican Party  
 Penn DOT  
 Penn Pines Diner, Aldan  
 Pfaff Brothers Construction, Inc.,  
 Glenolden  
 R.T. Opdenaker & Sons, Aston  
 Robin Mann, DCVA President  
 Andrew Saul, DCVA Board Member  
 Sharon Savings Bank  
 Shore Diner, Upper Darby  
 Suburban Waste Services, Aston  
 The Ale House, Newtown Square  
 The Painted Horse, Clifton Heights  
 The Radnor Conservancy  
 The Sierra Club  
 Trieste Restaurant, Prospect Park  
 Ursinus College Watersheds Course  
 Waste Management, Primos  
 Zac's Hamburgers, Secane

## President's Pen

--Continued from Page 1

Bill's regular involvement with DCVA activities, as he and his wife have relocated nearer their retreat on the banks of the Brandywine. However, we know Bill will continue to monitor our progress with this, and other, endeavors to restore and protect the watershed.

As we look ahead, we are anxiously awaiting the start of Delaware County's Darby Creek Greenway planning process, which will afford us the opportunity to advance the preservation and restoration of the Darby's riparian areas, the top priority identified in our own Darby Creek Watershed Conservation Plan.

Meanwhile, we are busy preparing for the Governor Printz Canoe Challenge to be held in September, and looking to engage broad participation in the planning, and in the paddling!

Please watch our website for updates on all of our events, [www.dcva.org](http://www.dcva.org). And join us!

*Robin Mann*

## Cleanup Report

—Continued from Page 4

others over the years to become site captains and network with their municipal officials, civic organizations, local businesses and youth groups to have cleanups in new areas along the Darby and its tributaries. After Dougherty retired as Cleanup Chairman, the position was held for a few years by then board member, Tom Houghton, who carried on in Dougherty's footsteps in fine style. In 2004, Houghton's growing family and business responsibilities and move to Chester County left him with less time for DCVA activities. Board members Jan and John Haigis, who had been site captains at the Blue Bell on Cobbs Creek since the late 1980's, assisted Tom with the overall 2004 Cleanup. As Co-Chairs since 2005, the Haigises have led the Cleanup initiative into a new era of public education and promotion. In 2005 they created watershed placemaps featuring a watershed game along with a stream map to demonstrate how much the watershed interconnects the 31 municipalities along its banks. These were distributed for use at local restaurants in the month before the Cleanup in 2005 and 2006. They also worked on adding new cleanup sites each year. In 2005, the list grew from 15 sites to 19, and, in 2006, to 23 sites.

The placemaps were very popular in 2005. As a result, the DCVA was approached by the Council of Governments (COG) of Eastern Delaware County with a request for a placemap with a storm water management theme that they could use for public education in their municipalities: Lansdowne, East Lansdowne, Colwyn, Darby Borough and Upper Darby. Jan and John responded by designing two storm water management placemaps for 2006, a dated one for the Cleanup and a separate undated COG model which could be used in their communities for more than one year. The 2006 theme also inspired a booklet of humorous "Songs of Storm Water Management," which Jan and John wrote to familiar tunes to encourage people to act wisely to help prevent creek flooding and contamination. A few of these were included on each version of the placemap.

## Creekside Responsibility

—Continued from Page 2

use of herbicides, insecticides and fertilizer is a great way to help the aquatic life.

The children in our neighborhood gather at the stream and ponds, and shout out their amused observations of the wood frogs, the goslings, and the heron. They are privileged to learn about nature first-hand. As is typical of children throughout the history of mankind, they do not yet have the experience to understand when we tell them how lucky they are! Someday they will wistfully tell their own children about watching tadpoles grow and counting the days that the mallard hen sat on her eggs. For now, it is up to their parents and neighbors to preserve and restore the Darby for the now and for the future.

## The Valley

*The Valley* is published by DCVA (Darby Creek Valley Association), P.O. Box 732, Drexel Hill, PA 19026. Website: [www.dcva.org](http://www.dcva.org). Articles for this newsletter were written by Anne Ackerman, Dick Carroll, Kathryn Goddard Doms, Jan and John Haigis, Clyde Hunt, Rosemary Kesling, Khiet Luong, Robin Mann, Alan Samel, Bob Shaner, Tom Smith, and Grace Wheeler. Photographs courtesy of Alan Samel and Jan Rushforth. Edited by Rosemary Kesling. ♻️ Printed on recycled paper. © 2006.



### Cricker's Corner

By Tom Smith

As I write this it is nearing twenty five years since I experienced the special summer of 1982. In early '82 I determined to visit every stream section of the Darby Creek Watershed. My sons Bill (born 1976) and Nolan (born February 1978) were able to amble with me. Since we spent part of each day in the immediate environs of the 1600's Swedish Cabin, we later used the tag, "The Year of the Log Cabin Summer." The watershed we saw is vastly different from the watershed that we know today.

One difference is that the Swedish cabin is no longer open to the ravages of bad weather. It is on the Commonwealth and National Registries of Historic buildings. Importantly, in its own small way the isolated spot is a small piece of protected water-edged-land. This is a good difference.

I write this smack between the Naylor's Run and Cobbs Creek. In the 1740's an old woman lived nearby. Her name was "Ma Dol" and she worked as a house slave. One day Ma' disappeared leaving no trace. Later her lifeless body was found with a rope around her neck. She had hung herself. She was beside a little run and this feeder took the name Dol's Run.

It is little recorded in modern books, but just as self mutilation was common among slaves, many slaves chose to commit suicide. Dol's Run has ceased to flow.

In conclusion, it is too bad that Dol's Run no longer meanders. The disappearance of each run is a little treasure lost. I might even say that with each loss we lose something of ourselves.

Some changes over time are good. Some rob us.

## JOIN THE DARBY CREEK VALLEY ASSOCIATION TODAY!

The Darby Creek Valley Association (DCVA) is dedicated to the protection and enhancement of all of the watershed's resources, including water, wildlife, historical sites and the floodplain. The organization's immediate goals are to prevent all forms of pollution in the Darby Creek and its tributaries, to prohibit dumping and construction on the floodplain, and to expand our educational programs for all residents within the watershed. It also seeks to improve water quality and maintain a debris-free stream through clean-ups and public education. DCVA works to preserve historic properties, such as the Swedish Cabin and the Blue Bell Inn. The Association would like to set aside the more than 30 miles of valley for use as a greenway for all residents to enjoy. We need your support. Help us continue to protect the environment for ourselves and our children.

**We invite you to fill in the form below, check member category, and mail form with your check to:  
The Darby Creek Valley Association, P.O. Box 732, Drexel Hill PA 19026**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ Your Municipality \_\_\_\_\_

Representative (if organization member) \_\_\_\_\_

Type of Membership: (The Board recently approved an increase in the dues structure to support our programs.)

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual Member ..... \$25.00       | <input type="checkbox"/> Nonprofit Group..... \$35.00      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family Member ..... \$35.00           | <input type="checkbox"/> Corporate/Municipal ..... \$50.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Senior Citizen / Student..... \$10.00 | <input type="checkbox"/> Life Member ..... \$250.00        |

To support the many DCVA projects, I would like to make a contribution of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ in addition to my dues.

# CALENDAR

Saturday, August 19, 2006  
9 a.m.

DCVA Board Meeting  
Springfield Friends Meeting, 1001 Old Sproul Road, Springfield

Saturday, August 19, 2006  
2 p.m.

Friends of the Swedish Cabin Picnic.  
Call 610 623-1650 to make reservations.

Saturday, September 16  
8 a.m.

Governor Printz Canoe Challenge. (See Page 1 for information)  
Registration Form inserted into this newsletter.  
Registration Deadline September 2, 2006

Tuesday September 26, 2006  
7 p.m.

Public Meeting about Darby Creek Greenway  
Springfield Township Municipal Building

Friday, September 29, 2006  
9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Delaware County Household Hazardous Waste Collection  
Rose Tree Park, Media. Computers, monitors, scanners, printers, fax  
machines, and portable TV's will be accepted at this particular event.

Saturday, October 15  
9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

StreamWatch Identification Workshop  
Springfield Friends Meeting, 1001 Old Sproul Road, Springfield  
(See Page 6)

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Darby Creek Valley Association  
P.O. Box 732  
Drexel Hill, PA 19026



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