

THE CATALYST

SLIPPERY ROCK WATERSHED COALITION MONTHLY ACTIVITIES UPDATE

NEXT MEETING: April 11, 2024, at 7 pm at Jennings Environmental Education Center. New faces are always welcome! Free pizza and pop provided! 3/14/2024 meeting attendance: J. Belgredan, C. Denholm, M. Dunn, L. Furst, D. Johnson, S. Smith, S. VanDerwal

Bye-bye Beavers!

For those who regularly traverse the hiking trails at Jennings Environmental Education Center, there is a good chance you have seen the effects of beaver activity over the past few years, if not caught a glimpse of the beavers themselves. For a while there were some signs posted at the beavers' habitat that displayed a scoreboard of Beavers Vs. Maintenance Staff — with the beavers always winning the game. Staff at Jennings did their best to manage water levels and protect the forest environment, but in the end the beavers proved to be too much. Often-flooded trails and dozens of beaver-felled trees led to the tough decision to “thin the herd” and have a trapper harvest some of the beavers who had made their home at Jennings.

Long ago, beaver parts had many uses and trapping was quite common. When European settlers first arrived here more than two centuries ago, they were greeted by brutally cold temperatures of Pennsylvania winters. Every year, thousands of folks died because of the harsh conditions. Remedies were scarce, but one of the best things pioneers found to keep warm was the thick, insulating fur of a beaver. Beaver parts can be used to make hats, coats, mittens, holsters, footwear, and more. They have been used in traditional medicine, bait and lure, perfume and makeup additives, dog food, etc. In Pennsylvania, trappers nearly wiped out the beaver population. At the start of the 19th century, there were no or very few beavers in the entire state. For more than three decades, beavers were legally off limits to hunters. Fortunately things have changed. In 1917, the Game Commission released a pair of beavers from Wisconsin into a remote valley in Cameron County. Since then, descendants of the pair, and other beavers brought into the state from Canada, have brought the population back to healthy levels. So healthy, in fact, that beavers have taken up residence at Jennings from time to time over the past few years.



Beavers, which can weigh as much as 60 pounds when fully grown, gnaw through tree trunks to get at the nutritious leaves and twigs that wait above. When they are finished dining on the wood, they use their ever-growing front teeth to cut the tree into smaller sections that they use to build dams and lodges. The animals build lodges in the middle of small streams to protect themselves from predators and for shelter from the



weather. They build dams in the streams to create a protective moat around their lodge. Beavers also use the dams to control a stream's water level. Often, they will increase the size of a dam in order to make the pool behind it deeper. This allows the agile swimmers to reach more food without having to leave the safety of the water. Unfortunately this activity also causes flooding of nearby hiking trails. Many times over the past few years, the trails near the beaver lodges have been forced to close. Water levels became so deep it was impossible for hikers to walk through submerged trails (see photo at left). With the harvesting of the beavers, Jennings staff hope to give park guests a more enjoyable, drier, hiking experience this year. For those of you who were fans of beaver-watching, no worries! The population was only thinned, and no doubt the beavers will attempt a comeback!



Leave it to the beavers! A beaver dam and beaver lodge created by Jennings Environmental Education Center's resident beavers make for fun photos but are nuisances for maintenance staff and hikers dealing with flooding and habitat degradation (*see article page 1*).

Upcoming Outdoor Fun at Jennings!

Spring is in the air and we are so excited to get outside and enjoy it! Here are a few upcoming fun events happening at Jennings Environmental Education Center...

Woodcock Watch and Owl Prowl

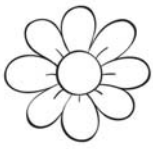
Join Jennings staff and members of the Bartramian Audubon Society on Saturday, March 23 from 7:00 – 10:00 PM for a woodcock watch and owl prowl. The American Woodcock is a shorebird that has adapted to live away from the water, often found in open or shrubby areas. The male Woodcock has a unique courtship display in the springtime used to attract females. This display can often be observed at dusk and into the night. Barred Owls are common in Pennsylvania but are primarily nocturnal and so largely go unseen. They prefer a mixed forest and are typically found near water. Barred Owls are territorial and will often respond when their call is played. After a brief indoor presentation, the group will venture out onto the prairie area trails in hopes of hearing owls and seeing the male woodcocks demonstrating their courtship display. This program is free but space is limited and pre-registration is required no later than Wednesday, March 20. Register online or by calling Jennings at 724-794-6011.

Shining Light on Eclipses

Embark on an approximately 45-minute journey with "Shining Light on Eclipses", our indoor program for all audiences. Delve into lunar and solar eclipses, uncovering their science and cultural stories. Through a relaxed blend of simple narration and visuals, we'll guide you on an illuminating journey to discover the magic that occurs when celestial bodies briefly steal each other's spotlight in this captivating exploration of the celestial realm. On Monday, March 25th, we will experience a penumbral lunar eclipse and on Monday, April 8th, portions of North America will experience a total solar eclipse and Pennsylvania is lucky enough to be in the path of totality. Join us and discover the mystery and history of lunar and solar eclipses and be prepared to experience both these astronomical wonders. This program is free and no registration is required.

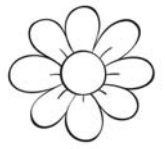
Nature Trivia Nights

Join us on the last Wednesday in March for Nature Trivia Night hosted by Jennings staff! Come solo or as a team. Everyone can play! Be ready to compete, have fun, and test your nature knowledge. Prizes for winners. These events are free and no registration is required. Nature Trivia Night will begin at 6 PM in the JEEC Classroom, with the theme "Baby Animals." Hope to see you there!



The KIDS Catalyst

SLIPPERY ROCK WATERSHED COALITION FUN ACTIVITY



Spring Coloring Page

Happy Spring to our *Kids Catalyst* participants! This month we have a coloring page for you celebrating some of what we enjoy seeing outdoors when spring begins. You can turn it into a sign/decoration to hang on your wall or door at home, or share it with us! If you mail us your colored page, we'll send you a \$1 credit for Amazon through a parent's email. You can save up credits to buy yourself something really fun!



Name _____ Age ____ Parent email address: _____



Slippery Rock Watershed Coalition c/o Stream Restoration Incorporated
A PA Non-Profit Organization
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