

The Pinchot Eagle



Friends of Pinchot State Park

April/May/June 2010

Box Turtles at Pinchot State Park

By Sally Ray, Board Member



PHOTO BY SALLY RAY

Eastern Box Turtle (*Terrapene carolina*)

The eastern box turtle, *Terrapene carolina*, is one of several species of turtles found at Gifford Pinchot State Park. It averages five to six inches long and possesses a high, domed shell with a hinged plastron (bottom shell) that allows the turtle to completely withdraw inside. The shell is variable in color, but usually has yellow and dark brown markings.

This attractive turtle finds the mix of deciduous woodlands and wet areas well suited to its habitat needs. The diet of the box turtle is varied and includes both plant and animal matter such as earthworms, slugs, mushrooms, and berries.

Box turtles have been documented to live longer than 100 years of age. Certainly 30-40 years of age is not uncommon.

Unlike small mammals that rapidly reproduce and replace themselves, turtles sometimes require a lifetime of reproductive effort in order to leave offspring and maintain a stable population. Nests are frequently destroyed by predators such as raccoons and skunks.

(Continued on page 2)

Assistant Park Manager Retires

By Beth Kepley, Park Naturalist

Jesse Taylor, IV retired from the Bureau of State Parks, DCNR, in January 2010 after 35 years of service.

Jesse started his career with the Bureau of State Parks in 1975, when he was hired as a water treatment plant lab technician at Gifford Pinchot State Park. In 1977, Jesse became Park Manager at Shikellamy State Park. Jesse stayed at Shikellamy until 1983



PHOTO COURTESY OF GPSF

when he took the position of Assistant Park Manager at Gifford Pinchot State Park.

In his 27 years at Pinchot, Jesse has seen many employees come and go, but the wealth of information he takes with him is irreplaceable. We will miss you Jesse! ■

DID YOU KNOW...

Pennsylvania's 117-state park system competed with the best systems in the country, and was awarded the top honor as the 2009 National Gold Medal Award for Excellence in Park and Recreation Management by the American Academy for Park and Recreation Administration in partnership with the National Recreation and Park Association.

This prestigious award honors the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources for its skill in planning for and managing the diverse state park system, and also for its innovative approaches that have drawn people into state parks in new ways and connected them to nature through outdoor recreation.



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

March 26 **Vernal Pool Night Walk, 7:30pm**
Campground Office, Registration Required

April 10 **Wildflower Walk, 1:00pm**
Pavilion #2 (Sunnyside), Conewago Day Use Area

July 10 **Christmas in July, 2:00pm**
Registered Campers Only

October 23 **Pinchotween, 2:00pm**
Environmental Center, Conewago Day Use Area

October 23 **Trick-or-Treat, 6:00pm**
Registered Campers Only

*Please visit our website for an updated list of events:
www.friendsofpinchot.org/home/calendar*

Box Turtles at Pinchot State Park *(continued from page 1)*

Box turtles tend to have rather small home ranges, usually not more than two or three acres in area. Their home range has to provide areas with a good food supply, shaded, damp or wet areas to retreat to on hot summer days, a suitable place to burrow in for the winter, and an area that meets the requirements for nesting. If appropriate nesting areas are not present, they will travel outside of their usual home range to find habitat that does meet their needs. Unfortunately, this often means that the turtles will cross roads to get to such areas. Last year eight box turtles were found hit on the roads around the park; six of the turtles were killed along a one-half-mile stretch of road.

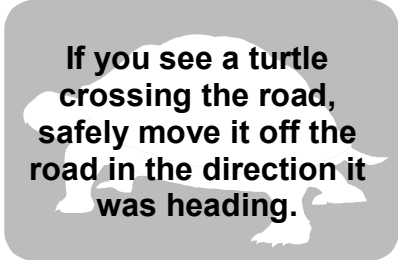
In an attempt to create more open areas where turtles might nest, a group of volunteers recently spent two days clearing several old fields by removing the shrubs and small trees that were slowly closing in these old meadows. It is hoped that these newly opened up fields will be attractive as nesting areas to the turtles in that area.

The month of June is a critical one for the female box turtle. When conditions are right, she will seek out a suitable sunny location where she can dig a nest and lay her eggs. The site must have some exposure to the sun to help incubate the eggs.

As temperatures drop in the fall and the available food supply diminishes, the box turtle moves into the area where it will spend the winter. The over-wintering site is typically in a depression or cavity which the turtle may enlarge slightly to suit its

needs. A layer of leaves and possibly snow cover, helps to protect the turtle during the cold winter months. Because their body temperature tracks that of their surroundings, they will remain in a dormant state from roughly late October through April. As spring arrives, the turtles respond to increases in temperature and daylight hours. By mid to late April the box turtle is active once again.

As June approaches, drivers who travel along Pennsylvania's rural roads, should keep a watchful eye for turtles attempting to cross roads. If while driving, you encounter a turtle on the road, safely pull off to the side, and move the turtle across the road in the direction it was heading. Do not move them to someplace "better". Turtles are very closely tied to their home territories and will try to return home if they are displaced. Because of dwindling numbers, and loss of habitat, the box turtle is now protected in Pennsylvania and may not be collected. If you see one in the wild, enjoy the moment, take a photo if you like and consider yourself lucky to have seen an animal that might be older than you are! ■



The Friends of Pinchot State Park would like to extend a special thank you to the following individuals who helped remove the shrubs and small trees as part of the old field habitat improvement project: Kevin Merlino, Jen McCoy, Jason Russell, Logan Leer, Matt Thompson, Jim Merlino and the support from Park Manager, Bill Rosevear. This habitat improvement will benefit the box turtles as well as native plant species.

Ice Sales in Campground

Starting this spring, the Friends of Pinchot State Park, will embark on a pilot program to make ice available within the campground. The sale of ice will be a convenience to campers and a fundraiser for the Friends.

Spring Wildflower Watch



By Betsy Leppo, FOPSP Board Member

After 40+ inches of snow in a record-book February, even the most ardent snow bunny may be winter-weary. But spring is coming to Gifford Pinchot State Park. From early April through the end of May, the wildflower display begins in earnest. A spectacular display can be seen by hiking Lakeside, Fern, Midland, and Alpine Trails.

Under the snow, in the wet woods along Beaver Creek, you might find the purple mottled "hoods" of **Skunk Cabbage** flowers (*Symplocarpus foetidus*). This amazing plant creates its own warmth which helps it get an early start.

Round-lobed Hepatica (*Hepatica americana*): A pinwheel of rounded petals in pastel pink, blue, lavender, or white; the leathery three-lobed leaf is present year-round.

Bloodroot (*Sanguinaria canadensis*): Large lobed leaves push out of the ground in a tight roll; unfurls to reveal a large pinwheel of slender satiny white petals around a yellow center.



Skunk Cabbage
Symplocarpus foetidus



Trout Lily
Erythronium americanum



Round-lobed Hepatica
Hepatica americana



Marsh Marigold
Caltha palustris



Bloodroot
Sanguinaria canadensis



Virginia Bluebells
Mertensia virginica



Rue Anemone
Thalictrum thalictroides



Trillium
Trillium sp.

Rue Anemone (*Thalictrum thalictroides*): A whirl of dainty three-lobed leaves form a pedestal under small clusters of white or pinkish star-shaped flowers.

Trout Lily (*Erythronium americanum*): Lily-like leaves, mottled in green and brown, blanket the ground with nodding yellow flower petals that curl backwards.

Marsh Marigold (*Caltha palustris*): Sprays of buttercup-yellow flowers shine over dense mounds of glossy round or kidney-shaped leaves; found in wet woods.

Virginia Bluebells (*Mertensia virginica*): Clusters of sky-blue trumpet-shaped flowers nod over elongate oval bright-green leaves.

Trillium (*Trillium sp.*): Elegant in a symmetry of three; a whorl of three large leaves topped with a white or purplish three-petaled flower.

Remember, picking flowers is not permitted in the park, please leave them there for others to enjoy! ■

WILDFLOWER PHOTOS BY PAT SABOLD

Invasive Species Alert



Garlic Mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*)



PHOTO BY SALLY RAY

One spring flower we DON'T want to see is **Garlic Mustard** (*Alliaria petiolata*). This non-native species alters the soil chemistry and displaces native wildflowers.

Learn how to identify Garlic Mustard and keep it from taking over *your* wildflower habitat:

<http://www.nps.gov/plants/ALIEN/fact/alpe1.htm>

Wildflower Walk

Saturday, April 10, 2010
@ 1:00pm
Conewago Day Use
Pavilion #2 (Sunnyside)

April is excellent for wildflowers at Gifford Pinchot State Park. Join board member and native wildflower enthusiast, Pat Sabold, for an easy to moderate walk in search of these spring gems.

For more information:
Park Office (717) 432-5011 or
email psaboldFOPSP@aol.com

Vernal Pool Night Walk

By Betsy Leppo, Board Member

Vernal pools are depressions in the forest that, during wet periods, fill with water from precipitation, snowmelt, and/or ground water, and then dry during the summer months.

Vernal pools are often the only wet areas found in

The Friends of Pinchot State Park's ANNUAL REPORT can be viewed at www.friendsofpinchot.org/home/newsletters

otherwise dry upland forest habitats. The seasonal nature of these pools is important because it excludes fish that would otherwise prey upon the eggs and young of salamanders and frogs.

Come learn more at a vernal pool night walk, open to all Friends of Pinchot State Park and their friends and families. *Registration required.* ■

Date: Friday, March 26, 2010
Time: 7:30pm
Location: Campground Office (off E. Camping Area Rd.)
Bring: Flashlight and boots that can get muddy
Contact: (717) 432-5011 or ekepley@state.pa.us

Changes in the Board of Directors

The Friends of Pinchot State Park would like to extend a warm welcome to new board members, James Grove and Steve Stroman.

James Grove is from York and enjoys camping, hunting, and other outdoor activities.

Steve Stroman is from Warrington Township. He loves to hike and serves on the board of the Keystone Trails Association. Steve is the policy director of Citizens for Pennsylvania's Future (PennFuture), a statewide environmental advocacy organization. ■

FRIENDS OF PINCHOT STATE PARK 2009 Financial Report	
Revenue	
Membership Dues	390.00
Contributions.....	1263.00
Sales (firewood).....	3115.41
Other (transfer of funds from previous Pinchot Interest Group)	12408.56
Total gross revenue	\$17,097.97
Expenses	
Website support.....	50.00
Stock for park store (souvenirs).....	613.70
Postage	12.40
Firewood supplies	1286.03
Summer camp supplies	530.30
Banking fees	33.00
Total expenses.....	\$2,525.43
Net income	\$14,572.54



2200 Rosstown Road
Lewisberry, PA 17339
(717) 432-5011
Email: FOPSP@aol.com

ADVISORY BOARD

Chairman
Jim Merlino

Co-Chairman
Ted Prindle

Treasurer
Sally Ray

Secretary
Betsy Leppo

Board Members
Larry Reddy
Kevin Merlino
Pat Sabold
James Grove
Steve Stroman

Park Representative
Beth Kepley

This volunteer advisory board is dedicated to preserving, protecting and enhancing the natural and recreational resources of Gifford Pinchot State Park for present and future generations.

Friends of Pinchot State Park is a chapter of the Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation (PPFF). The PPFF is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Contributions are tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law.

Newsletter Editor: Pat Sabold
psaboldFOPSP@aol.com

Publication deadlines are the 15th of each quarter (March, June, September, December). The Advisory Board reserve publication decisions.

FRIENDS OF PINCHOT STATE PARK

Annual Membership Application

Make checks payable to: PPFF
(include FOPSP on the memo line)

Mail form with payment to: Friends of Pinchot State Park, 2200 Rosstown Road, Lewisberry, PA 17339

NEW MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

__ Senior (age 65+)	\$5.00	__ I'd like to make a tax-deductible contribution of \$_____
__ Individual	\$10.00	
__ Family	\$15.00	
__ Damselfly Sponsor	\$50.00	__ I'm interested in volunteering
__ Dragonfly Sponsor	\$100.00	

Name(s) _____

Street _____

City _____

State/Zip Code _____

Phone _____

Email _____

I would like to receive my newsletter via email: Yes No

Friends of Pinchot State Park was formed in March 2009 as a chapter of the Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation (PPFF). The PPFF is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Contributions to PPFF are tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law. The official registration of the Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling toll free within Pennsylvania 1-800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.

Memberships are for one year, June 1 through May 31.