



PHOTOS BY BLAKE GOLL/STAFF

RUSHTON NATURE KEEPERS

Inspiring tomorrow's conservationists

Rushton Nature Keepers (RNK) provides youth (ages 7-11) with unique opportunities to develop a meaningful relationship with nature, which will fuel a lifelong desire to protect the environment. RNK is focused on shaping and empowering these future conservationists while nurturing a spirit of discovery and wonder. We offer monthly programs covering four conservation themes: **birds and wildlife, regenerative farming, watersheds, and healthy habitat.**

- Our Objectives for Your Child:**
- Create a conservation ethic by showing the importance of preserving open space.
 - Connect personally to nature and foster a lifelong respect of the natural world.
 - Nurture a spirit of discovery and wonder.
 - Refine birding abilities and cultivate a wholesome lifelong hobby.
 - Develop observation skills and understanding of science beyond the classroom.
 - Recognize the connection of wildlife, farming, and watersheds.
 - Understand how people can help create and preserve healthy habitat.
 - Appreciate the origins of the food we eat and how nature and agriculture can flourish together.
 - Demonstrate the positive role humans can play in the natural world.
 - Foster an awareness of how everyday personal choices can help the planet.

RNK Membership is \$150 for the first child and \$100 for each additional sibling. Membership allows you to **register for any 2020 program via the Eventbrite online portal (some programs have limited capacity).** Membership includes a t-shirt, reusable water bottle, and nature journal per child. Parents are always welcome to attend programs. Waivers will be offered on a case-by-case basis as we do not wish to exclude anyone based on financial need. Otherwise, membership is required to attend events.*

**Please note there are some family events on the schedule that siblings of all ages and friends will be invited to attend without a membership including the Songbird Banding Open Houses (May 2 and September 19) and the Summer Moth Party (June 26).*

A Rushton Junior Naturalist Certificate will be awarded to Rushton Nature Keepers who attend at least two programs within each of the four themes (for a total of 8 programs). They will be invited to attend the Rushton Junior Naturalist Celebration in November during which prizes will be awarded. Each program will allow time for reflection in a nature journal in which children will receive attendance stamps to document their progress. Each event is designated with icons as covering one or more of the four themes listed above (see calendar).

Photography policy: Attendance at Willistown Conservation Trust programs and events constitutes consent to be photographed for use in print and electronic media. Images will not be identified using full names without written approval from the individual. Please notify Trust staff if you would prefer that your or your child's photo not be used.

A CLOSER LOOK

The Rushton Nature Keepers Conservation Strategy

While each of the four themes of Rushton Nature Keepers is an important part of what we do here at Willistown Conservation Trust, the connection to land stewardship and land protection is the universal thread.

1. Birds and Wildlife are the global heartbeat. Birds connect people across continents with their awe-inspiring migrations and provide the charismatic face that compels people to protect habitat. Our Rushton Woods Preserve is a hub of bird conservation, boasting the region's premier bird banding station that attracts leaders in ornithology and inspires visitors to care about their avian neighbors.

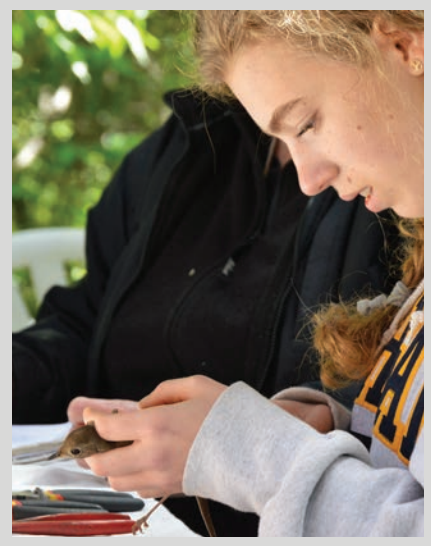
3. Watersheds must be safeguarded through land conservation and sound environmental practices. Our partnership with the Academy of Natural Sciences of Drexel University provides us with the tools we need to monitor the three watersheds we protect: the Ridley, Crum, and Darby Creeks. We study all aspects of stream health including underwater insects that serve as indicators of water quality.

2. Regenerative Farming is the way of the future and an answer to sustaining the world's growing population. By taking care of soils first and minimizing overall impact on the land, regenerative methods have proven to be just as productive as conventional methods. Rushton Farm is a leading model of environmentally responsible farming methods that create and enhance habitat for native wildlife and pollinators while growing food for the community.

4. Healthy Habitat begins in your own backyard. The Trust has implemented a number of small-scale habitat restoration projects over the years, which serve as demos for landowners interested in supporting healthy habitat. For example, native wildflower meadows have been established to support pollinators, stream sides have been planted with native trees for erosion control, and native shrub habitats have been planted to support migratory birds.



OPPORTUNITIES FOR TEENS



Looking to stay involved beyond RNK?

Opportunities may exist on a case-by-case basis for children ages 13 and up to get involved. These include service at the farm, working at the bird banding station, helping with watershed study activities, participating in bird counts and stream cleanups, internships or other projects agreed upon with Willistown Conservation Trust staff. To arrange, contact Blake Goll (bhg@wctrust.org).

Photo: Eva Dillon-Rutledge began as a Jr. Birding Club member years ago and then volunteered at the bird banding station. She has also volunteered for our Bird Box Program, participated in NJ Audubon's World Series of Birding and recently attended PA's Wildlife Leadership Academy.



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2020 RUSHTON NATURE KEEPERS EVENTS

The RNK Mission is to inspire a lifetime of caring about and protecting nature.

Harvest Hoopla

Friday, October 9 | 4:30-6:30 pm | Rushton Farm

Celebrate the harvest! Join us for a hayride with Farmer Fred and a study of the living soil that supports the crops and the organisms that inhabit the farm. To round out our agroecology lesson, we will end up in the kitchen at the Rushton Conservation Center – cooking and tasting a sample of the farm's bounty.

Hawk Watch at Okehocking Preserve

Sunday, October 18 | 2:00-4:00 pm | Rushton Conservation Center

Join veteran hawk counter, educator, and birding instructor, Holly Merker, at the height of the fall migration. After her program about hawk watching and conservation at the Rushton Conservation Center, we'll head over to a hawk watch platform at the local Okehocking Preserve. You'll learn all about raptor identification and see migrating raptors like Red-shouldered hawks!

Monster Night

Thursday, October 29 | 4:30-6:00 pm | Rushton Conservation Center

Observe spooky little stream creatures projected from a microscope onto a screen to MONSTER size! Learn all about which fish are native and which are invasive (the real monsters!) and how invasive species compete with natives for limited resources. Then get creative designing your own stream bug.

Northern Saw-whet Owl Banding

Friday, November 6 | 6:00-8:00 pm | Rushton Conservation Center

Observe Northern Saw-whet Owl banding at Rushton Farm and experience nature at night. These tiny owls (no bigger than a soda can) travel through Pennsylvania in the fall in search of ideal overwintering habitat. Learn all about their ecology and conservation from our field scientists and (hopefully) see an owl up-close.

Visit to Chester County Food Bank

Wednesday, November 11 | 4:30-6:00 pm

Chester County Food Bank | 650 Pennsylvania Drive, Exton

Join us for a tour of the Chester County Food Bank facility, which serves the hungry and food insecure of our county. We'll learn about the problem of food insecurity and the process of food donation. Rushton Farm itself donates about 3,000 pounds of fresh produce annually. This experience is a lesson in not taking food for granted.

Rushton Junior Naturalist Celebration

Friday, November 20 | 4:30-6:00 pm | Rushton Conservation Center

Nature Keepers are invited to this special celebration. Those who have attended two programs within each of the four themes as designated by the icons on the schedule (for a total of 8) will be awarded the Rushton Junior Naturalist certificate. Following a final activity, there will be a fun awards ceremony with prizes.

Winter Bird Count





Saturday, December 5 | 9:30-11:00 am | Rushton Conservation Center

Enjoy a morning of winter birding at Rushton Woods. We will count birds in the tradition of the National Audubon Christmas Bird Count (CBC), which is the longest running wildlife survey in the world. We'll also learn how to enter our sightings into eBird, a powerful tool for monitoring bird population changes over time.

Addresses

Willistown Conservation Trust Headquarters (WCT)
925 Providence Road, Newtown Square
Rushton Conservation Center (RCC)
915 Delchester Road, Newtown Square
Rushton Woods Preserve and Farm
911 Delchester Road, Newtown Square
Ashbridge Preserve
E. Strasburg Road, West Chester
Kirkwood Preserve
Grubbs Mill Road, Newtown Square

Program Key

 Birds and Wildlife
 Regenerative Farming
 Watersheds
 Healthy Habitat

Movie Night: *Bird of Prey*

Thursday, March 12 | 5:45-8:00 pm | Rushton Conservation Center

World-renowned wildlife cinematographer, Neil Rettig, embarks on the most challenging assignment of his career: to find and film the rarest eagle on the planet. An expertly woven tale with stunning cinematography, *Bird of Prey* journeys deep into the vanishing world of the Great Philippine Eagle and reveals an inspiring group of people that are determined to save the world's most critically endangered eagle species from extinction. **The movie will begin promptly at 6 pm followed by a discussion of the state of our birds and what we can do to help.**

Sheep Shearing

Thursday, April 16 | 4:30-6:00 pm

Plumsock Farm | 920 Plumsock Road, Newtown Square

Join us in a pastoral setting for a sheep shearing demonstration. Children will get to witness and take part in a sheep shearing and learn about the history of domesticated sheep as farm animals and wool as a sustainable fabric.

Songbird Banding Open House and Stream Walk

Saturday, May 2 | 6:30-10:30 am | Rushton Woods Preserve & Farm

Stop by the region's premier bird banding station at Rushton Farm anytime between the operating hours of 6:30-10:30 am (arrive by 9 am) to observe the incredible science of bird banding and learn about bird conservation. You'll see handsome spring warblers and also get to tour the stream where our watersheds experts will have live aquatic invertebrates on display.

Nature Poetry Workshop

Wednesday, May 6 | 4:30-6:00 pm | Rushton Farm

In the merry month of May after the earth has fully awakened, we will explore the preserve looking for birds, wildflowers, and other wonders of spring. Guided by Villanova University professor and award-winning poet, Cathy Staples, we will create memorable works of poetry from our observations.

Potato Planting

Wednesday, May 13 | 4:30-6:00 pm | Rushton Farm

Get your hands dirty and help the farm staff plant potatoes! Since this farm is regenerative it complements the surrounding ecosystem by providing habitat for myriad living things besides the crops. We'll come across many interesting insects and birds while working in the field and learn about how this farm functions within the surrounding landscape.

"The Secret Life of the Skunk" Book Signing & Art Workshop

Tuesday, May 19 | 4:30-6:00 pm | Rushton Conservation Center

Participants will each get a pre-ordered copy of "*The Secret Life of the Skunk*", a new science-based children's book by Laurence Pringle about family and survival. The talented artist, Kate Garchinsky, will be with us for a reading and "how to draw a skunk" session with her original sketches from the story.

Must pre-register by May 5th to be included on the book order. \$10/book. Bring cash or check to the event.

Stream Walks

Wed./ Thurs. June 10 & 11 | 4:30-6:00 pm | Kirkwood Preserve

Explore different stretches of the stream with our watershed specialists while learning about the basics of stream ecology. We will get up close with macroinvertebrates that call the stream bed home and get a chance to discover our bucolic grassland preserve. Wear shoes that can go in the water! Attend either event.

Field Trip to the Academy of Natural Sciences

Wednesday, June 17 | 12:30-2:30 pm

19th street entrance of the Academy, Philadelphia

Go behind the scenes of the Academy of Natural Sciences, home to one of the world's largest collections of bird specimens. We will get to observe ornithologists and see the amazing bird collection. Scientists use these specimens for research (e.g., understanding impacts of climate change on bird morphology and ecology).

Summer Moth Party

Friday, June 26 | 7:30-9:30 pm | Rushton Conservation Center

Enjoy a summer evening at Rushton with the moths and fireflies! We will survey what species are here by using blacklights against white sheets. Local naturalist and moth enthusiast, Sheryl Johnson, will help us identify these beautiful night flyers. Fermented bait will also be used to attract the moths.

Meet the Bees and Honey Tasting

Wednesday, July 8 from 4:30-6:00 pm | Rushton Farm

Join Rushton's beekeeper, Noah Gress, to meet Rushton's busy honeybee colony. Children will have the opportunity to extract and taste honey straight off the honeycomb and learn about the importance of honey bees and native bees.

Arachnids!

Friday, July 24 from 5:00-6:30 pm | Rushton Conservation Center

John Black, Master Naturalist and former President of the Native Plant Society of New Jersey, will teach us all about the fascinating world of spiders. They are important creatures that should be appreciated rather than feared. John will show us why they matter and reveal spider secrets, like that some spiders can dance!

Leaf Pack Walk

Wed./ Thurs. July 29 & 30 | 4:30-6:00 pm | Ashbridge Preserve

Learn stream ecology with the Director of our Watershed Protection Program as we focus on understanding food webs and invasive species. Explore the stream for bugs, and investigate "leaf packs". Attend either event.

Wildflowers and Watercolor Workshop

Tuesday, August 4 | 4:30-6:30 pm | WCT Headquarters

Explore the Trust's spectacular wildflower meadow and paint with watercolors outdoors with a local artist! We'll also learn about the importance of native plants for pollinators and what you can do in your own yard to support these insects.

Discover Rushton Mini Camp

Thursday, August 20 | 9:00 am-2:00 pm | Rushton Farm

Spend a day at Rushton exploring the woods and fields, monitoring bird boxes, and making bouquets, forest art, and gnome homes. We'll also work on the farm, harvesting the potatoes you helped plant in May. In addition, we will be discovering the power of Motus technology for tracking the movements and migrations of birds through a case study of a nano-tagged bird.

Songbird Banding Open House

Saturday, September 19 | 6:30-10:30 am

Rushton Woods Preserve & Farm

Bring a friend to the banding station anytime between the operating hours of 6:30-10:30 am (arrive by 9 am) to observe the science of bird banding, meet field biologists, and see beautiful migrant birds up close. Kids will also get to "practice their banding skills" at a demo net.