



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 including: **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 2021 program online at [wctrust.org/rushtonnaturekeepers](http://wctrust.org/rushtonnaturekeepers)**. Membership includes a t-shirt, reusable water bottle, nature journal, mask, and tote per child. Programs are drop-off only unless otherwise noted. Waivers will be offered on a case-by-case basis (no questions asked) as we do not wish to exclude anyone based on financial need. Otherwise, membership is required to attend events.

**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 (see calendar)\*.

*\*Please note that other relevant WCT family programs or volunteer events may pop up during the year that can count towards the Rushton Junior Naturalist certificate. Members will be notified as opportunities arise.*

**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.

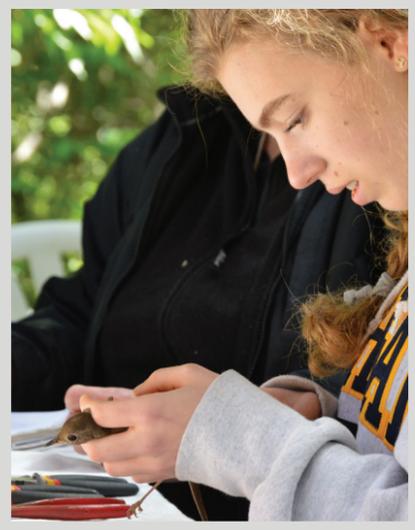
**2. Regenerative Farming** is the way of the future and an answer to sustaining the world's growing population. By taking care of soils first and minimizing overall impact on the land, regenerative methods have proven to be more productive than conventional methods. Rushton Farm is a leading model of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

**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.

**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 native 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 exist on a case-by-case basis for children 12 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](mailto: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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# 2021 RUSHTON NATURE KEEPERS EVENTS

## Songbird Banding & Rushton Woods Preserve and Farm Tour

**Saturday, May 1 | 9:30-11:00 am | Rushton Woods Preserve & Farm**

Visit the region's premier bird banding station at Rushton Farm to observe the incredible science of bird banding and learn about bird migration. You'll see handsome spring warblers and then take a walk to the stream where our Watershed Team will have live aquatic insects on display. Finally, we will end up at the farm for an intro to regenerative farming, or farming in concert with nature.

## Potato Planting

**Wednesday, May 12 | 4:30-6:00 pm | Rushton Farm**  

Help the farm staff plant potatoes! Since this farm is regenerative it complements the surrounding ecosystem by providing habitat for many living things. We'll discover a diversity of insects and birds while working in the field and learn about how this farm functions harmoniously within the surrounding landscape. In addition, we will monitor and learn about bird boxes.

## "The Secret Life of the Sloth" Book Signing and Art Workshop

**Thursday, May 27 | 4:30-6:00 pm**

**Rushton Conservation Center**

Participants will each get a pre-ordered copy of "The Secret Life of the Sloth", a brand-new science-based children's book by Laurence Pringle about a three-fingered sloth who lives in a rainforest habitat. The talented artist of the book, Kate Garchinsky, will be with us for a reading and "how to draw a sloth" session with her original sketches from the story.

**Must pre-register by May 14th to be included on the book order. \$10/book.**

**Bring cash or check to the event.**

## Stream Walks (2 Dates)

**Thursday, June 3 | 4:30-6:00 pm | Kirkwood Preserve**

**Friday, June 4 | 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.

## Fireflies, Moths, and Your Yard in the Dark

**Friday, June 25 | 7:30-9:00 pm**

**Rushton Conservation Center**

Enjoy a summer evening at Rushton observing and learning about one of our best-loved insects, the firefly! We will discover what sets them apart from other beetles, the intricacies of firefly light shows, and how to help vulnerable nocturnal insects in your backyard.

## Meet the Bees and Honey Tasting

**Wednesday, July 7 | 4:30-6:00 pm | Rushton Farm**

Join Rushton Farm Field Manager and beekeeper, Noah Gress, to meet Rushton's busy honeybee colony! We'll taste honey straight off the honeycomb and learn about pollination. We'll also learn about the role of other native bees and butterflies as pollinators and why it is so important to create pollinator habitat.

## Herping with a Wildlife Biologist

**Thursday, July 22 | 4:30-6:00 pm**

**Rushton Conservation Center**

Mike McGraw is a professional Wildlife Biologist working for Applied Ecological Services. He consults on ecological restoration projects in a variety of habitats all around the country. While he is an expert on many kinds of wildlife, his favorite are herps (amphibians and reptiles). Explore Rushton Woods for salamanders, snakes, and frogs with the expert, and learn what it takes to be a wildlife biologist!

## Leaf Pack Exploration (2 Dates)

**Wednesday, July 28 | 4:30-6:00 pm | Ashbridge Preserve**

**Thursday, July 29 | 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, invasive species, and how terrestrial and aquatic habitats are linked. Explore the stream for bugs, and investigate "leaf packs". Wear shoes that can go in the water! Attend either event.

## Wildflowers and Watercolor Workshop

**Thursday, August 5 | 4:30-6:30 pm**

**Willistown Conservation Trust Headquarters**

Explore the Trust's spectacular native wildflower meadow and paint with watercolors in the fresh air! We'll identify different flower species and also learn about the importance of native plants for pollinators and what you can do in your own yard to support these important declining insects.

## Discover Rushton Mini Camp

**Thursday, August 12 | 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. Snacks will be provided, but campers should bring their own lunch.

## Hunters of the Sky

**Wednesday, September 8 | 4:30-6:00 pm**

**Rushton Conservation Center**

Dawn White, Environmental Educator and Owner of Indian Run Environmental Education Center, will present her live raptors (owls and hawks)! These birds are non-releasable wildlife ambassadors. We'll learn their stories, what sets raptors apart from other birds, and how we can help protect them. We will then learn about the perils some of these raptors face during migration through a fun game.

## Fall Songbird Banding

**Saturday, September 18 | 8:00-10:00 am**

**Rushton Woods Preserve & Farm**

Observe the science of bird banding, meet field biologists, and see beautiful migrant birds up close. Nature Keepers will get to "practice their banding skills" at a demo net. Also bring your binoculars (or let us know if you need to borrow a pair) for a birding walk as we learn bird identification tips.

## Forest Ecology

**Tuesday, September 28 | 4:30-6:00 pm**

**Rushton Woods Preserve & Farm**

Join Director of Stewardship Andrew Kirkpatrick to explore the forest communities of Rushton Woods Preserve. Trees form a complex network of habitat for a variety of creatures, and every forest has its own unique ecology. Learn how to identify different ecosystems by reading the intricacies of the forested landscape.

## Autumn Harvest

**Friday, October 8 | 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 harvest 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.

## Fall Migration Bird Count

**Saturday, October 16 | 9:30-11:00 am | Rushton Conservation Center**

Enjoy a morning of beginner birding at Rushton Woods during the height of migration. Bring your own binoculars or let us know if you need to borrow a pair. We'll also learn how to enter our sightings into eBird, a powerful tool for monitoring bird population changes over time.

## Monster Night

**Thursday, October 28 | 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 5 | 6:30-8:00 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.

## Rushton Junior Naturalist Celebration

**Friday, November 19 | 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.

### 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**