



PHOTOS BY BLAKE GOLL/STAFF

RUSHTON NATURE KEEPERS
Inspiring tomorrow's conservationists

Rushton Nature Keepers (RNK) provides youth (ages 8-11) with unique opportunities to develop a meaningful relationship with nature, which will fuel a lifelong desire to protect the environment.

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.
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 includes a t-shirt, reusable water bottle, nature journal, mask, and tote per child.

A Rushton Junior Naturalist Certificate will be awarded to Rushton Nature Keepers who attended events within each of the 4 themes for a total of at least 8 by year-end.

*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.

Photography policy: Attendance at Willistown Conservation Trust programs and events constitutes consent to be photographed for use in print and electronic media.

A CLOSER LOOK
The Rushton Nature Keepers Conservation Strategy

We believe these four themes are the key focus areas that have the biggest impact on land conservation and earth stewardship.

1. Birds and Wildlife are the global heartbeats. Birds connect people across continents with their awe-inspiring migrations and provide the charismatic face that compels people to protect habitat.

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.

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 the overall impact on the land, regenerative methods have proven to be more productive than conventional methods.

4. Healthy Habitat begins in your own backyard. The Trust has implemented several small-scale habitat restoration projects over the years, which serve as demos for landowners interested in supporting healthy habitat.

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.

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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2023 RUSHTON NATURE KEEPERS EVENTS

**BONUS events are OPEN EVENTS and not exclusive to Rushton Nature Keepers, so feel free to bring your family or a friend. Free for Rushton Nature Keepers, but there may be a registration cost for non RNK members.*

Discover Wild Rushton

Tuesday, June 20 | 9:30-11:30 am

Rushton Woods Preserve and Farm

Welcome to Rushton Nature Keepers and summer! For our kick-off event, we'll get to know each other while exploring the woods and fields of Rushton Woods Preserve. We will learn about some of the actions we take here to study and help birds: like monitoring bluebird boxes, creating insect-rich habitat, and tagging birds. Nature Keepers will get a private sneak peek at our summer breeding bird banding station nestled in the heart of the forest. Then we'll discover what type of habitat baby birds like best after leaving their nest! In addition, we'll explore the bustle of insect life that exists in the wild meadows and on the blooming milkweed that borders the farm fields.



Into the Forest

Wednesday, June 21 | 9:30-11:30 am

Rushton Woods Preserve and Farm

Ignite your sense of wonder and awe as we ground ourselves in the beauty of the forest. We'll practice mindful connection to nature through walking barefoot, tree hugging, and forest bathing (no bathing suits required!). We will also look for salamanders and explore secret parts of the forest including an ancient red maple wetland.



Leaf Pack Exploration

Thursday, June 22 (rain date: June 23) | 9:30-11:30 am

Ashbridge Preserve

Learn stream ecology with Director of our Watershed Protection Program, Lauren McGrath, as we focus on understanding food webs, invasive species, and how terrestrial and aquatic habitats are linked. Explore the stream for bugs called macroinvertebrates, and investigate "leaf packs." We'll also learn about our resident beavers at Ashbridge Preserve! (Wear shoes that can go in the water.)



BONUS*: Streams Learning Evening

Monday, June 26 | 5:30 pm | Ashbridge Preserve

What do you know about the residents of Ridley Creek? Join Lauren McGrath, Director of Watershed Protection at WCT, and her team to learn all about the health of Ridley Creek, the life that calls this waterway home, and how we care for surrounding habitat that impacts this amazing ecosystem! Come on out for this family-friendly event, wear some old shoes, and be prepared to have some fun!



Stream Walk

Tuesday, June 27 | 9:30-11:30 am | Kirkwood Preserve

Explore Crum Creek 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 are comfortable for walking and can go in the water!



"The Secret Life of the Flying Squirrel"

Book Signing and Art Workshop

Wednesday, June 28 | 9:30-11:30 am

Rushton Conservation Center

Follow a year in the life of Volans, a flying squirrel, as she glides in the night air to hunt for food, deftly avoids danger from a raccoon, and gives birth to three tiny pups before preparing once again for the coming winter. "The Secret Life of the Flying Squirrel" is a brand-new science-based children's book by Laurence Pringle. The talented (and local!) artist of the book, Kate Garchinsky, will be with us for a reading and "how to draw a flying squirrel" session with her original sketches from the story. Afterwards, we'll monitor our farm bird boxes and witness the banding of any Purple Martin chicks from our martin hotel!



Must pre-register by June 7th to be included in the book order. \$18/book. Bring cash or check to the event.

Farming with Nature and Honeybees

Thursday, June 29 | 9:30-11:30 am

Rushton Conservation Center

Let's help out on the farm! But this isn't just any farm; it is regenerative, meaning it complements the surrounding ecosystem by providing healthy, chemical-free habitat for many living things while conserving water and making soil (which also helps fight climate change). 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. We'll also get to meet Rushton Farm Field Manager Noah and his honeybees who are really there to provide us with yummy honey.



BONUS*: Fireflies, Moths, and Your Yard in the Dark

Thursday, July 6 | 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.



Wildflowers and Watercolor Workshop

Thursday, July 27 | 4:00-6:00 pm

Willistown Conservation Trust Headquarters

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



BONUS*: Bug Night with Academy of Natural Sciences

Wednesday, August 16 | 8:00 pm

Rushton Woods Preserve and Farm

Did you know there are over 11,000 species of moths in North America? Explore the fascinating nocturnal insect world with entomologists from the Academy of Natural Sciences who will be sampling the population of moths, beetles, flies, crickets, and more with mercury vapor lights set against white sheets.



Summer Harvest

Thursday, August 17 | 9:30-11:30 am

Rushton Woods Preserve and Farm

Spend a morning at Rushton helping the farmers harvest the bounty of the season, like potatoes and tomatoes! Then we'll meander into the woodlands for some creative fun, making forest art, gnome homes, and toad abodes. The flower cutting garden will also be in full bloom, so we'll create personal bouquets to take home.



Fall Songbird Banding

Saturday, September 16 | 8:30-10:00 am

Rushton Woods Preserve and 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 and learn about the mysteries of migration. Sanctuaries such as Rushton provides are integral to the survival of migratory birds as they journey hundreds of miles from breeding to overwintering grounds.



Monster Night and Autumn Hayrides

Thursday, October 19 | 4:30-6:30 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. Get creative designing your own stream bug, and then take an autumn hayride through the farm fields at sunset!



Northern Saw-whet Owl Banding

Friday, November 3 | 6:30-8:30 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 17 | 4:30-6:00 pm | Rushton Conservation Center

All Nature Keepers are invited to this special celebration. Those who have attended events within each of the 4 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 challenge activity, there will be a fun awards ceremony with prizes and pizza!

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
1691 E. Strasburg Road, West Chester
Kirkwood Preserve
855 Grubbs Mill Road, Newtown Square

Program Key



Birds and Wildlife



Regenerative Farming



Watersheds



Healthy Habitat



Visit the Rushton Nature Keepers webpage to stay up to date!



Sign up for our general Meadowlark Newsletter or A Bird's Eye View of Rushton Newsletter that updates you on spring and fall bird migration!