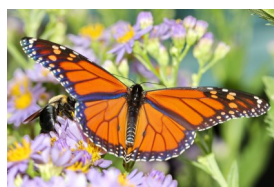
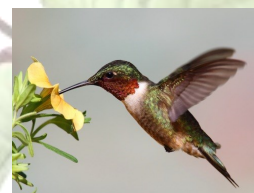


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West Creek Wetland Education Center is a place for all of the community to enjoy! With a convenient walking trail, a wetland observation platform, and the perfect picnic pavilion, it's a great place for your next outdoor adventure and who knows, you might see some interesting flora and fauna while you're there. Here are some things to look for on your next visit!

Native Pollinators are everywhere and the Wetland is a great place to see some of them! Who are these pollinators? There are many, ranging from butterflies and bees to ants and hummingbirds! Next time you see one flit by take a moment to think about what those pollinators are up to and what an important role they play in producing the foods we eat and the flowers we love!



Article Continued on PG 4



Welcome New Staff

PAGE 2

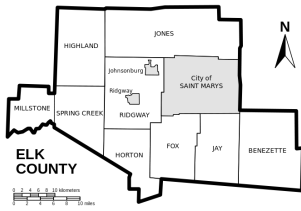


Evan Delong-Evan is from Kane and joined the Elk County Conservation District in December of 2019. He received his bachelor's degree with a concentration in environmental biology from Clarion University. Evan spent time working on his master's degree in geo-environmental hydrology from Shippensburg University before being hired. He has spent his summer employment doing forestry activities around the Allegheny National Forest. Evan enjoys spending time outdoors by fly fishing, hunting, and boating. He is also passionate about coaching wrestling.

Taylor Gillette-Taylor is a native of Cameron County. He joined the Elk County Conservation District in October of 2019. Taylor previously interned at the Cameron County Conservation District, doing a variety of activities. He is a graduate of the Pennsylvania State University where he studied Wildlife Technology, and Wildlife & Fisheries Science. Taylor enjoys spending time outdoors hunting and fishing.



Victoria Challingsworth-Victoria is an Elk County local and joined the Elk County Conservation District in February of 2020. Victoria earned her Bachelors of Science in Environmental Science from Thiel College. She has spent time utilizing her degree while working as a Backcountry Steward for the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, as Company Locator for Allegheny Contracting of Ridgway, PA and most recently as Conservation Education Specialist for the Keystone Elk Country Alliance in Benezette, Pa. Victoria loves spending her free time backpacking with her dog, Oakley, fishing, hunting and gardening.



Who's covering that program?

With recent staffing changes some folks may find themselves wondering who is the correct contact for the various programs at the Elk County Conservation District. Here is a list of staff, their program responsibilities, and contact info.

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Kate Wehler

District Manager

District Administration, Chapter 105 Stream and Wetland Permitting, Chapter 102 Erosion and Sediment Control, Dirt, Gravel, Low Volume Roads Program
kwehler@countyofelkpa.com

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Resource Conservation Technician

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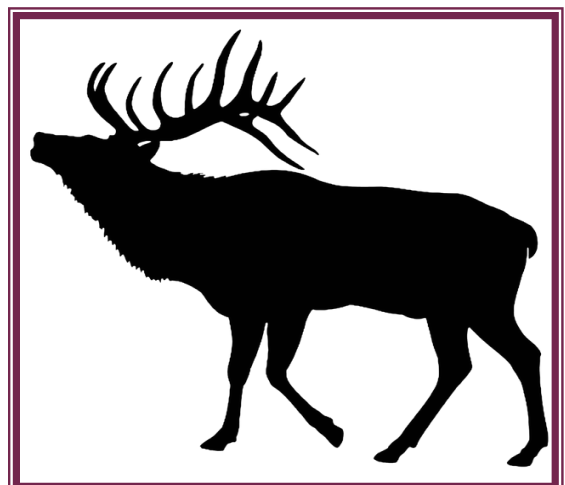
Resource Conservation Technician

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Ryan Grimm

Resource Conservation Technician

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Take a walk in our Wetlands

Continued from Page 1

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Did you know there is a bat box located at the West Creek Wet-



lands? This large bat box provides habit for these small but very important animals. One little brown bat can eat approximately 1000 mosquito sized insects in an hour!

Skunk Cabbage is a unique wetland/lowland plant to keep your eyes open for. One of the first plants of spring it is easy to identify from its purple center and large green leaves. In spring, if you look closely you'll notice Skunk Cabbage typically doesn't have any snow around it or on it, that is because Skunk Cabbage can actually generate its own heat!

Skunk Cabbage



Wetlands are a great place to look for birds! Keep your eyes open for some of the bluebird boxes we have around the wetland and you just might see one of the residents, the Eastern Bluebird. Another common patron of the wetlands are Red-winged Blackbirds. Easily identified by the bright red and yellow patch on their shoulder as shown above. The males will often cling to the tops of cattails and call for a mate.

Of course keep your eyes open for our friend the Beaver! Beaver help raise water levels and make wetland water retention possible. Even if you don't see them be on the lookout for signs they're around such as gnawed trees and beaver lodges and dams!



So you want to build a pond?

Construction of a pond on your property can be as rewarding as it is costly. Contrary to popular belief, building a pond is a lot more than just putting a hole in the ground and having it fill with water. More times than not, a pond needs to be approved by an engineer. This upfront cost can save you from future problems, that may occur down the road, caused by the new structure. Here are a few questions to ask yourself before planning your pond project.

- 1)** What is the purpose of my pond?
- 2)** What is the water source of my pond and how will it effect the neighboring sources?
- 3)** Have you given thought to the amount of water needed from the source in comparison to the pond size to avoid stagnation? Precipitation is not enough water to fill or maintain a pond.
- 4)** Are there wetlands within the location planned for the pond? It is not acceptable to build ponds over wetlands under Federal and State laws.
- 5)** Will the soil types around your proposed pond location hold water? Soil types can be permeable and allow water to flow through your new planned ponding.
- 6)** Where is your proposed pond located related to your septic system and underground utilities? Septic system discharges can contaminate the water in the pond and create algal blooms, elevated bacteria counts and destroy the ponds planned uses. Other underground utilities (electric, telephone, cable television, etc.) can be damaged by elevating the ground water by creating a pond.
- 7)** Are there livestock of any kind using the areas upslope of the planned pond? Wastes from cattle, horse, chicken, swine, dogs all can create elevated nutrients and bacteria counts causing algal blooms and odors, damaging the intended use of a pond.
- 8)** Is the planned pond location near the elevation of your building foundation, increasing possible water issues in basements?

Answering these questions will be imperative to attaining the proper permits and approvals in order to construct a pond



Pond Permit Guide

This guide is intended to be a quick reference explaining what permits may be required for several typical pond activities.

Pond Construction

Municipality— Your municipality may require a permit for constructing a pond on your property. Contact your municipal code enforcement officer for more information. Be prepared with details about how the pond will be constructed and its proposed location and size.

County Conservation District— Because sediment is the top pollutant to our waterways by volume, construction activities that disturb soil is a regulated activity. If the proper controls are not installed during construction, even a small pond project can release a large amount of sediment downstream. All projects with earth disturbance should prepare an Erosion and Sediment Control Plan to follow and have available on site during construction. An Erosion and Sediment Control Plan should be submitted to the local county conservation district for review for any project that exceeds 5,000 square feet of earth disturbance. Your municipality may require a review by the conservation district even if the area of disturbance is less than 5,000 square feet. If construction of a large pond will disturb 1 acre of earth or more, a federal National Point Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit for construction activities should be submitted to the county conservation district for review.

Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection and United States Army Corps of Engineers—Many potential pond sites are located in or near wetlands and streams, rivers or creeks. Wetlands are unique systems, and the many benefits they provide are lost when excavated or flooded to create a pond, so it is strongly encouraged to avoid or minimize impacts to these systems. A wetland consultant should be hired to complete a delineation to confirm whether impacts will occur during construction. If some wetland impacts are unavoidable during excavation, a state Chapter 105 Water Obstruction and Encroachment permits and Federal Section 404 permit will be required and the area of wetlands impacted will need to be replaced. In addition, contact PA DEP's Division of Dam Safety to obtain a dam permit if the drainage area upstream of the dam exceeds 100 acres, maximum depth will exceed 15 feet or the volume of water (surface area multiplied by depth) contained by the dam will exceed 50 acre-feet.

Pond Dredging

Municipality— Contact your municipal code enforcement officer to determine if your municipality must issue a permit before you dredge your pond.

Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission and Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection— Drawing down the water level of the pond and allowing the sediment to dry out is typically necessary prior to dredging a pond. A drawdown permit is only required for ponds that are 1 acre or larger.



County Conservation District— Because dredging involves excavation of sediment, pond dredging activities are reviewed by the county conservation district. Please refer to the 'Pond Construction' section of this sheet for information on which permits apply based on the total area of earth disturbance. The District will also require documentation of how the dredged material will be stabilized on site and/or documentation that the removed material is certified as clean fill and will be transported to an approved site.

Backyard Birding for Beginners

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There are many ways to spend time social distancing. Bird watching or birding is an excellent way to stay in touch with nature and can be done from the confines of your home. An inexperienced “birder” can easily mistake one bird species for another. With the helpful guide we hope to help you distinguish between a few commonly mixed up pairs!



Black-Capped Chickadees and White-Breasted Nuthatches are commonly mistaken at first glance to an untrained birder. A few things to note that could be used to easily distinguish the two species. The First distinguishing feature is the bird's head. The chickadee's head appears to be oversized for their small body and round. The cap on the chickadee extends down the head through the eye. The chickadee also has a black throat patch with a small sharp beak. The nuthatch has a more fitting head to body ratio with more of an oval shape. The cap remains on the top of the head and runs down the back of the neck or the nape with a long beak compared to the head.



Another pair of birds people frequently confuse are House sparrows and Song sparrows. While both are similar in size perhaps the easiest way to tell them apart is by their

head coloring. Song Sparrows have a striped crest and a stripe through the eye. They also have brown and white speckled chest. While House sparrows have a black swatch below their beak and a grayish chest and belly. The males have grey cap and brown neck. While the females have a brown cap with a buff stripe along the eye.



The house finch and purple finch are more difficult to tell apart than any other bird species in the article. The easiest time to distinguish the two species is during the

breeding season and to look at the males due to the male having bright breeding plumage. Once you have narrowed down the identification to either of the two species it is time to really start to pick apart the plumage features that the bird being observed has and compare it to the two species. First, let's describe the features of a house finch. The male house finches are rosy red around the head and upper breast. The rest of their body is a plain grayish-brown with thick streaking.

The Purple finch has a rosy red head similar to the house finch. The red on the head and breast of the purple finch extends down past the upper breast and lower on the back. The streaking on a purple finch is not brown, the streaking is red unlike the brown of the house finch.



Ticks and Lyme

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With the weather warming and folks beginning to step outdoors more often, it's also time to think about a rather unsavory character who lives in our local woods and fields, the Deer Tick. While ticks are unpleasant, there is no reason to fear going outside because of them. With the proper knowledge and preparation you can keep yourself and your family safe when exploring the great outdoors.

Prevention: Some things you can do to prevent tick bites

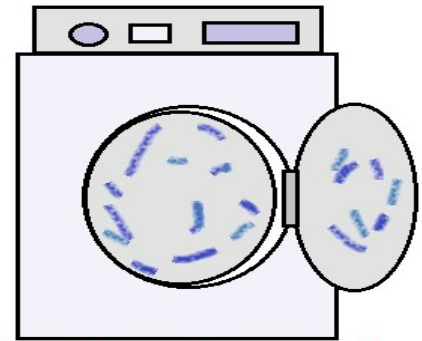


1.) Tuck— Before heading out tuck your clothes in. Tuck pants into socks, and shirts into pants, to prevent ticks from getting below clothes. It may not be the most stylish but being safe is! Also when selecting clothes opt for ones that are of lighter or brighter coloring, this makes ticks easier to see.

2.) Repellant— There are many repellants on the market. Pick the one that suits your needs. There are both all natural and chemical repellants and there are also treatments for just your clothes. DEET is one of the heavy hitters when it comes to repelling ticks and statistically sprays with 60-70% DEET seem to work the best. Clothes can be treated with permethrin, this is for clothes ONLY. It is not to be put on skin directly. The chemical soaks into clothes and boots and helps keep ticks away.



3.) Be Mindful—After leaving the woods being mindful and aware that you may have ticks on you is crucial. Cleaning off before you hop back in the car can be helpful. Whether you use a lint roller to roll over clothes and pick up any ticks or you change your attire and put the dirty pair in a bag, these steps can help prevent bites. One important step once you get home is showering and putting your clothes in the dryer. If they aren't really dirty and don't need washed but you want to ensure they are tick free, then toss them in the dryer. Heat and dryness from the dryer will kill the ticks, studies show that about 15 minutes will do the trick!



Heat for 15 minutes.

****Remember ticks can be super small in their larva stage they are as small as the tip of a needle! So it's best to be cautious. Preventing tick bites is the way to avoid getting Lyme disease. If you are bit by a tick, keep your eyes open for the tell tale bulls eye rash (not everyone gets a rash) and if you think you may have Lyme's disease see your healthcare professional.**



Remember Be mindful, and enjoy the great outdoors!

Getting your Garden Started

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It's that wonderful time of year again, when crocuses and daffodils bloom and birds chirp through the day. Spring is here and with it comes garden season! In our area it's too soon to start most plants outside, as we'll likely have a few more frosts this year, however, the good news is you can start your plants indoors.

Seedlings are best started indoors a few weeks before the season's last frost. Most seed packets have information on how many weeks before planting to sow the seeds. So, what do you need to get your garden started? Well, it's simple, seeds, soil and a container!

First you must decide what you would like to grow, most people plant tomatoes and peppers, plants that make a tasty summer salad or can be added to sandwiches and sauces. Their versatility makes them a desirable option for folks with limited space. Other plants like cucumbers can be started indoors but will take up much more space as they grow.

The next thing you need is a container. Many people use a seed starter kit which has small containers or cells for seeds which are pre-filled with soil. There are lots of styles and sizes on the market so you can select the size that suits you. It is always best to plant a few more seeds than you desire. Not all the seeds will take or a plant may die during transplanting. When I plant, I often use peat pots because the plant can be transplanted outdoors in the pot which will biodegrade. This prevents some potential trauma when transplanting. If you have space you may not even need to transplant! You can plant your seeds in the container you hope to grow them in. This naturally takes more space and soil initially. Many species have been hybridized to grow better in pots. If you don't have space for a garden consider planters and window boxes. Other options that do well in containers are herbs like basil, cilantro, and mint and greens like lettuce and spinach.



Next comes soil! If you didn't buy a pre-prepared seed starter kit then you'll need soil to add to your containers. There are many different options out there. Be sure to look for one labelled specifically as seed starter mix, which will be the best blend for your newly starting plants. They have organic options available as well, Jiffy has a great "Natural & Organic seed starting mix". Soil health is important for the success of a plant. The pH and available nutrients can have a major effect on your plants ability to grow.



If you plan to transplant your plants into a garden bed eventually, you can test your garden soil to help you determine how much fertilizer and lime to add for your plant's ideal balance. Penn State Extension, on the 2nd floor of the Courthouse Annex is where in Elk County people can purchase soil test kits. They cost \$10 and have instructions on how to sample your soil. It's easy to sample, you want to get a few little plugs from various locations in your garden, to help determine an average, mix the samples up in a bucket, spread the soil out on some newspaper to dry (samples must be mailed dry), then mix again in a bucket, and fill the bag. The sample bag already has postage on it, so you can just stick it in your mailbox. Then typically in about 2 weeks you get your results back. Soil testing is good idea because lime and fertilizer are expensive and adding too much, which your plants won't use, is like throwing money away because it won't stay in your garden for next year, but will run off and pollute our waterways. So whether you have a garden or use containers keep your soil quality in mind!



Starting seeds at home can be a great way to get your garden started and it is so satisfying to see the little seeds you planted begin to flourish. For parents with kids at home this is also a great way to have a "science class" with the kiddos. You can teach them how seeds grow, the different parts of a plant, and even the importance of pollinators for providing us with the foods we love!



Elk County

Conservation District

Elk County Recycling Center

850 Washington Street

Saint Marys, PA 15857

Follow us on Facebook!



Elk County (PA) Conservation District

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Russ Braun- Chairman

Mike Hovatter- Vice-Chairman

Joe Daghir- Commissioner

Ray McMinn- Farmer Director

Andy Sorg- Farmer Director

Joe Labant- Public Director

Chris Smith- Public Director

Jerry Olsen- Associate Director

Jim McCluskey- Associate Director

Ron McMinn- Director Emeritus

Staff

Kate Wehler, CPESC

District Manager

Ryan Grimm

Resource Conservation Technician

Taylor Gillette

Resource Conservation Technician

Victoria Challingsworth

Resource Conservation Technician

Evan DeLong

Watershed Technician

David Stubber

Solid Waste Enforcement

Diane Myers

Secretary

Upcoming
Events

May 25th— Memorial Day



June 6th— Conservation Cup



June 2nd— Primary Election
Day

June 22nd— ECCD Board Meeting

*Note: No Board meeting in May due to Memorial
Day Holiday