

# Linn Log

newsletter of the Merrill W. Linn Land & Waterways Conservancy

## Winter 2020



### Mission of the Linn Conservancy

To preserve and protect significant ecological sites in Union, upper Northumberland, and contiguous counties and to educate the public on conservation issues critical to the health of our environment.

### Board of Directors

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Allen Schweinsberg, Site/Stewardship Chair  
Geoff Goodenow, Coordinator  
Diane Donato, Editor  
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## for your calendar

**Tuesday, January 21, 5:30 - 7 pm** Community Service Fair, Bucknell University

**Saturday, February 8, 4 pm** Cross country ski and snowshoe event, White Springs

**Saturday, Sunday, February 15-16, 10 am** Cabin Fever, Mifflinburg

**Sunday, February 16, 12 noon - 4 pm** Snowfest, R.B. Winter State Park

**Wednesday, Thursday, March 11-12**, First Community Foundation Partnership's Raise the Region fundraising event

**Sierra Club** meets second Wednesday, 7 pm, every other month at Union County Govt. Center, Lewisburg. For more information, email [www.otzsierraclub.org](http://www.otzsierraclub.org)

**Seven Mountains Audubon Society** meets third Wednesday monthly at Kelly Township Hall on Ziegler Road at 7:30 pm. Seven Mountains Audubon bird walks, first Saturday of month. Meet at 7:30 am in front of old Walmart store near Panera's, Lewisburg. For details, visit [www.sevenmountainsaudubon.org](http://www.sevenmountainsaudubon.org)

### X-C Ski/Snowshoe Event Planned

Looking forward to some snow? We are. And, in

confidence that it will come, we are planning a cross country ski and snowshoe event at Thom Rippon's One Barn Farm a few miles southwest of Mifflinburg in the village of White Springs. We have set the date, **Saturday, February 8**, to coincide with a full moon. Thom's beautiful 90-acre property is laced with trails that should provide enjoyable skiing/snowshoeing through meadows and woodlands over gentle terrain and an opportunity to learn about nature on our winter landscape. We would like to meet at the property by 4 pm, about an hour before moon rise. If conditions are not suitable for snow-based activities, we can enjoy a walk on the property and learn a bit about its natural and human history. In any case, we will follow with light refreshments compliments of our host, Thom. This is a free event, but we are restricting participation to 30 people. **Please RSVP by Thursday, February 6** by emailing or calling our office. If you get the answering machine, please leave name, contact information and the number of people that will be joining you for the event.

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*"The oldest task in human history is to live on a piece of land without spoiling it."*

Aldo Leopold

### **X-C Ski/Snowshoe Event** *continued from page 1*

So let's think snow and look forward to a great winter evening under the light of the moon. (Note: a head lamp or flashlight might be helpful but not necessary.)

**Address:** 2640 Red Ridge Rd., Mifflinburg

**Directions:** From Lewisburg, take Rt. 45 west to the west end of Mifflinburg. Turn south onto Rt. 104. In about 2 miles, turn right (west) toward White Springs (SR 3004). Pass through the village center (note church on left) for about ¼ mile to top of short hill. Turn right at stone entry way and follow lane to the house.

### **Conservancy Completes New Conservation Easement Agreement**

Meadow Lane Farm: Prime Soils and Wetlands Preserved

*by Allen Schweinsberg, Site/Stewardship Chair*

The Merrill Linn Conservancy is proud to announce the acquisition of its latest conservation easement. Meadow Lane Farm, the Janet L. Shirk property, is a 56-acre farm in rural West Perry Township, Snyder County, on the outskirts of the village of Richfield.



*Meadow Lane Farm from the banks of Mahantango Creek*

While Richfield expands and nearby properties have been developed, this easement guarantees the preservation of open space and prime farmland in the vicinity. The majority of Meadow Lane Farm contains soils of the highest quality and will be preserved for agriculture.

As a bonus, the eastern and southern peripheries of the property consist of wetlands that have historically contained vegetation of special concern. Termed "Richfield Marsh" by the Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program, this marsh is said to be of "notable significance" due to the record of a Pennsylvania endangered plant, hard-stemmed bulrush, that was recorded at the site in recent years. The Natural Heritage Inventory reports that the shrubs—brookside alder, poison sumac, and Atlantic ninebark—dominate

the site. Poison sumac was still present and discovered by Warren Abrahamson, to his delight, on a recent visit.

The property's water resources also include Mahantango Creek, a tributary of the Susquehanna River. The Mahantango passes through the Shirk property for nearly half a mile as it passes just south of the well-preserved farmhouse.

Wayne McDiffett and Allen Schweinsberg originally met with Janet Shirk in 2018 through a friend of Mrs. Shirk, at which time she expressed interest in the long-term protection of her family property. Thanks to the devotion and cooperation of her nephew, Mark Graf, now the trustee of the Shirk estate, we have been able to craft a conservation agreement that will preserve valuable habitats and a scenic, rural component for the region.

### **Buffalo Creek Data is on the Map**

*By BCWA chairman, David Staebler*

In 2015, the Chesapeake Monitoring Cooperative was formed to take inventory of the data of relevant water monitoring programs and understand the health of the Chesapeake Bay watershed. With the help of the Alliance for Aquatic Resource Monitoring (ALLARM) at Dickinson College, our Buffalo Creek Watershed Alliance (BCWA) is now part of this effort.

The BCWA monitoring program includes testing at 15 sites in our watershed, ranging from near the Acid Precipitation Remediation Site in the Bald Eagle State Forest, to where the creek enters the Susquehanna River, just north of Lewisburg.

The data from this volunteer effort, some sites covering over 11 years, is now accessible online along with the data of more than 40 other organizations.

You can query by organization, geographical area (state, city or county), by individual site, or use the map to find the site or sites you would like to look at. See <https://cmc.vims.edu/#/home>

### **Seven Mountains Audubon Conducts 2019 Christmas Bird Count**

Forty-two local birders spent many hours looking and listening for birds on a cold, windy, overcast day in December. While conditions were not exactly pleasant for human or bird, observers documented 70 species within a 7.5 miles radius of Vicksburg, Union County.

While not the highest count ever, it is the greatest number of species seen since 2011. Fourteen species not seen in 2018 (one of the worst years in decades for species count) were sighted. Nineteen bald eagles were reported, but European starlings at over 6000 represented the greatest number of any one species. Many thanks to Allen Schweinsberg who has organized this event and compiled results for many years on behalf of the local Audubon chapter.

# Being of Service to Our Local Environment and the Merrill Linn Conservancy



## President's Message

*By Tali MacArthur, Linn Conservancy President*

Dear Linn Members and Supporters,

At this time of year we are thinking about what is dear to us, the people and things that matter most. End of year appeals and reminders to rejoin organizations are being sent to ask for your continued support of important work. I hope that you have found our letter among that pile and that you have given some thought about why you support the mission of the Linn Conservancy -- a mission that not only serves you today but also generations that will follow because the value of unique land and waterways will only appreciate over time.

This is also the season of sharing—sharing space at the table with those we love, sharing and exchanging gifts, sharing our time with others. Perhaps you will consider taking a moment to share with a friend or family member why you choose to support the Linn Conservancy. Share this Linn Log with them, share our website or Facebook page. Invite them to attend an event with you in the coming year. Invite them to join the Conservancy as a member or to volunteer their talents for our important work.

Though the official "holiday of thankfulness" has passed, I want to take a moment to thank you for your interest, passion, commitment, and continued support.

Cherish this season of giving, sharing, and joy.

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## An Invitation to Be Actively Involved with the Conservancy

*By Wayne McDiffett, Board Member*

The Linn Conservancy has recently celebrated 30 years of effort in our community to preserve land and promote environmental education. Given the size of our Conservancy and its financial resources, these efforts have been very successful.

We now have a total of 17 tracts of land in easement, which has resulted in the preservation of more than 1,600 acres and we continue to expand our environmental educational outreach within the area. Our ability to accomplish these things is due to the effort of members who believe in our mission

and provide membership dollars and other donations which make the Conservancy financially able to function. We are grateful as well to those very dedicated individuals who serve as our board of directors, committee members and others who volunteer time in support of our endeavors.

Like many small organizations that rely almost solely on volunteers, the Conservancy finds it difficult to maintain a fully active board of directors and to find enough volunteers to support our work. While a few new and young folks have accepted board seats in recent years, there are a number of board members who have served almost since the creation of the

*Continued on page 4*



## Being of Service to our Local Environment

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**Conservancy.** These people will be vacating their seats in the near future. The Conservancy will have to fill these vacancies. Similarly, we also have to grow participation in several committees that are fundamental to the functioning of the Conservancy.

Consider this communication an invitation to our members and other supporters to consider volunteering additional time to your Conservancy so that we may continue to our work to preserve local land and waterways and to educate. And if you know someone who might also be willing to help us in this way, please encourage them as well to contact our office to learn more about what we do and how they can contribute.



### Committee Work Is Critical To Conservancy Successes

*by Geoff Goodenow, Linn Conservancy coordinator*

The Linn Conservancy has been most fortunate over the years to have very dedicated and talented individuals serve on its board of directors. Each director is expected to serve on at least one of our three standing committees alongside other members and non-members to perform critical work for the organization.

Briefly, here's what each committee works toward. We hope you will consider offering your talent and energy to helping us address some of these functions.

**Site/Stewardship:** The major role of any land trust is protecting land and water resources. This committee

- (1) reviews applications for property protection with on-site visits;
- (2) makes recommendations to the board as to the

“worthiness” of a site for protection based on a prescribed set of criteria;

(3) performs baseline surveys of properties;

(4) negotiates conservation easement terms with property owners;

(5) conducts annual property inspections as required of us by law;

(6) reviews special requests by property owners regarding questions about their easements;

(7) addresses possible violation of easement terms;

(8) carries out trail maintenance.

**Education/Public Relations:** Board members recognize that keeping the public informed of local conservation matters and helping educate folks about such issues is vital to raising awareness to move people to action to protect our environment.

We must instill a sense of need for thoughtful stewardship of our natural resources that will motivate others to take action.

This committee organizes public programs (think of our annual Caring for Communities program and our fossil dig) that will inform and engage participants and leave them with a sense of caring for our place. Members also work on publicizing these events in local media and producing promotional literature and posters. They produce our newsletter, the Linn Log, three times annually, keep Facebook and website updated, represent us at public events, plan

and organize our annual banquet and other events.

**Membership/Development:** It is hard to make any of this happen and sustain it without a team to work on maintaining and building our membership base.

This committee makes annual appeals for membership renewals and promotes the Conservancy to attract new supporters. It promotes our participation in Raise the Region, secures funding for our annual Caring for Communities events and works on our ongoing efforts to build our endowment.

As you can see from this abbreviated list, there is a lot to keeping your Conservancy operating smoothly. No one has to do it all, but if there is something noted within any of these descriptions that you are moved to assist with, please contact through phone or email to let us know. Your ideas and energy are very important to our mission and successes.

## Brook Trout in Danger -- What We're Doing to Protect the Species

(Much of this article is based on a Bay Journal article from Oct. 2019, Vol. 29 No. 7, pages 8-9)

Did you know that the brook trout is the east coast's only native trout? The fish range from Georgia to Maine along the Appalachian Mtns., are the state fish of nine states including PA, and are often cited as an indicator of good water quality. Its scientific name, *Salvelinus fontinalis*, means "dweller of springs" referring to its reliance on cold water. Sadly, the species is gone from an estimated 60% of its historical range. In PA, brook trout are gone from 34% of watersheds and 39% of watersheds have populations reduced to about half their original size.



While habitat degradation due to stream water acidification has been reduced considerably, other threats to the species remain. Human development -- consider that one study found that brook trout are doomed even if as little as 1.5% of its watershed is covered by impervious surface resulting in chemical pollution and sedimentation. Non-native brown and rainbow trout, climate change, reduced forest cover including loss of hemlock trees (due to the wooly adelgid) which provide cooling shade for stream waters add to the threats. A 2015 report by the EPA warned that cold water fish habitat could decline as much as 62% over the next 80 years and a PA Fish Commission representative listed warming waters due to climate change as the number one threat to the species.

What's being done locally to help the trout? Several ongoing efforts are up and running:

(1) In 2009, the Buffalo Creek Watershed Alliance (BCWA) of the Merrill Linn Conservancy put into operation an acid waters remediation facility at the headwaters of Buffalo Creek. It has successfully raised water pH levels such that macroinvertebrates and brook trout have returned to the upper reaches of the watershed.

(2) Trout in the classroom programs have sprouted up locally in many school districts. The fish are raised by students throughout the school year then released each spring into waters suited to their survival.

(3) Streambank restoration projects facilitated by

local conservation districts and DEP have improved miles of degraded habitat. Last summer, for example, a section of Buffalo Creek downstream of the Hassenplug Covered Bridge in Mifflinburg was restored to improve that section of the waterway.

(4) Linn Conservancy board member and area administrator for the Chesapeake Conservancy, Adrienne Gemberling, has initiated a "live stake" program. In this effort, cuttings from shrubs and trees capable of sprouting when reset into moist ground are collected in late fall and early spring. At appropriate times, those stems are set into and along streambanks where they will take root. Once established, their deep roots will stabilize banks helping to reduce chemical runoff and sedimentation and their foliage will provide shade to help keep water temperatures down.

(5) Conservation easement protection by the Conservancy and its Linking Landscapes Initiative provide lasting protection along many waterways.

Let us be hopeful and do all we can to see that these efforts are successful in protecting this beautiful species throughout its current range and that it can return to its historic habitats.

### Conservancy Sponsors Wildlife Leadership Academy Participant

In line with your Conservancy's efforts to encourage local youth to become more engaged with their environment, the Conservancy has sponsored several students in the Wildlife Leadership Academy (WLA) for several years. Support comes from our Jeff Bowers/John C. Clark Memorial Funds as both of these men sought to support young people in environmental field experiences. 2019 was no exception as we supported Lewisburg's Jackson Martine in the ruffed grouse (PA Drummers) camp, one of several offered each summer that focus on different Pennsylvania species.

Jackson described the experience as "the clear winner" among all camps he has ever been part of. He enjoyed meeting fellow teens from around the state and learning about the grouse and threats to its habitat. He looks forward to sharing his new knowledge with friends and family.

To learn more about the WLA and to nominate a teen for a 2020 summer camp visit the program website at [www.wildlifeleadershipacademy.org](http://www.wildlifeleadershipacademy.org)

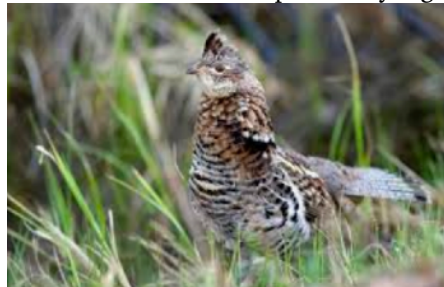


Photo: Audubon Field Guide



## Students, Scouts Volunteer and Learn at Conservancy-Protected Properties

Students from Bucknell and Susquehanna Universities and Lewisburg Area Schools visited the Dale-Engle-Walker property and the Merrill Linn Trail this fall to volunteer and learn about art (see Plein Air on facing page), geology, and biology at these protected sites.



*In early September, Susquehanna University first year students performed community service tasks at Dale's Ridge Trail as their first semester neared its start.*



*In the early days of their fall 2019 semester, Bucknell geology students were introduced to the Dale-Engle-Walker property. Here, geology professor Ellen Chamberlain prepared her students for a field experience at Dale's Ridge.*



*Boy Scout Troop 610 (above) performed fall trail maintenance at the Merrill Linn Trail near Mohn Mill Road on October 19. The troop has taken responsibility for the trail from Priestly Unitarian Fellowship members.*

*The Bucknell University baseball team (left) came out in full force to perform a community service fall cleanup at Dale's Ridge on October 20.*

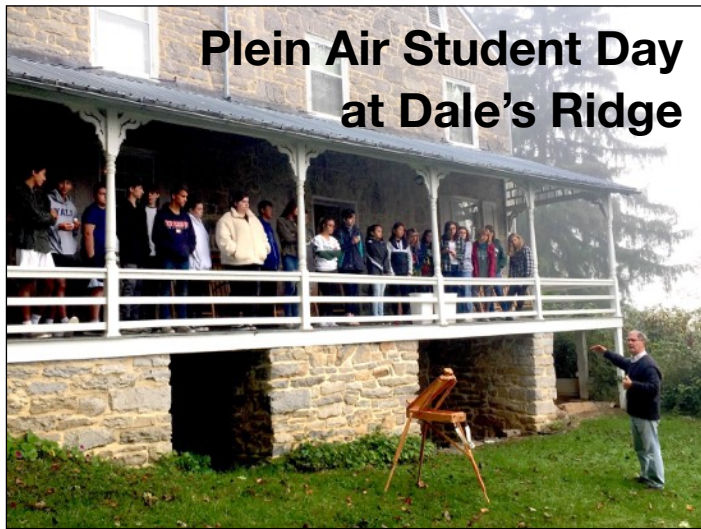
## Celebrating Winter Solstice at D-E-W

The Merrill Linn Conservancy and the Union County Historical Society sponsored a Winter Solstice Camp Fire and Lantern Walk at the Dale-Engle-Walker property on Friday, December 20. Learn more about this inaugural event in the Spring 2020 Linn Log.



*Hot chocolate, cookies, camp fires and toasted marshmallows helped take the chill off temperatures that fell into the mid-20s.*





## Plein Air Student Day at Dale's Ridge

While a plein air event has been offered for several years as part of the Linn Conservancy's Caring for Communities programming, few, if any, teens ever engage in the event. The thought that providing a day specifically for them might help motivate teens to participate in future plein air events evolved into a special day designed just for them.

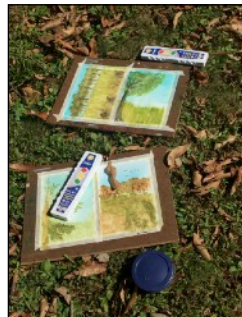
In October, Lewisburg Area School District art students were treated to a plein air event at the Dale-Engle-Walker (D-E-W) property, site of the Dale's Ridge Trail. The Conservancy took the lead in organizing this event in conjunction with the Union County Historical

Society (property owner), Barbara Baker (associated with the Lewisburg Council for the Arts) and district art teachers. Teachers at the Lewisburg High School and Donald Eichhorn Middle School responded enthusiastically to the idea of having their students spend a day at the



property to work on a project.

Two days were set aside for the event with approximately 25 students and their teachers in attendance for each. After some comments by Conservancy and Historical Society representatives, Barbara introduced local artist Michele Keller who described and



demonstrated various water color techniques for the students.

Teachers had previously prepared their students for the day and brought all materials that their students would need for their art work. The weather was beautiful and students had several hours during which they scouted for scenes that appealed to them and went to work with paper, colors and brush. Student works were later exhibited at Lewisburg's annual Stroll Through the Arts in early November.

Everyone enjoyed the days at D-E-W. Given its success, we look forward to hosting the event in coming years and perhaps expanding the invitation to teachers and students of other local school districts.





# Snyder County Fossil Dig Event Draws Hundreds

By Jeff Trop, Linn Conservancy Board member

On September 28, Bucknell geology professor and Linn Conservancy board member Jeff Trop hosted a fossil dig at a shale pit near Faylor Lake in Spring Township, Snyder County. Our thanks to Snyder County commissioner Joe Kantz and Spring Township supervisors who assisted in the event.

They provided significant improvements to the parking area and provided an ice-cream vendor\*, which was very popular on the warm, sunny day!

During the event, more than 200 participants of all ages used hammers and chisels, or simply their bare hands, to unearth

fossils. Trop, Bucknell students, and Lycoming College professor Dave Broussard helped participants discover and identify fossils.

Diggers unearthed organisms very different from those that occur today in Central Pennsylvania. From the shale, participants recovered exclusively marine organisms such as brachiopods, bryozoans, bivalves, crinoids, gastropods, and rugose corals. Some folks discovered trilobites, an extinct group of arthropods that crawled on the seafloor, and squid-like nautiloids that swam above the seafloor preying upon smaller animals. One of the most interesting discoveries was a conularid. Paleobiologists speculate that conularids



Jeff Trop (right) with father and son fossil enthusiasts



represent a precursor to modern jellyfish, but their evolutionary history remains controversial.

A number of participants brought interesting rocks or fossils to be identified, including remarkable trilobites, corals, and ferns. Visitors also explored a display of fossil assemblages collected previously from nearby sites that span tens of millions of Earth history. The assemblages demonstrate how ancient ecologies changed dramatically in response to changes in climate and sea-level, providing interesting long-term perspective towards modern environmental changes.

Given the popularity of “dig day” these past two years, the Conservancy looks forward to planning another event in 2020. Sharpen your chisels!

\*Please note that a portion of the vendor’s proceeds from the event were donated to support Trout in the Classroom programs in Snyder County school districts.



## Business Partners for 2020

Thank you to those business owners who have joined our Business Partner program for 2020. Your membership renewal letter contained your 2020 partner card indicating participating business for the current year and the discount they offer to you. Please patronize them as we hope that both they and our members benefit by this relationship.

**Bertoni’s Pizza**, Montandon; **Lewisburg Studio**, Vargo Outdoors, Mondragon Books, Lewisburg; **Brookside Bikes**, Mifflinburg; **Ian Adrian Nature Photography**, [iannaturephotography.com](http://iannaturephotography.com)



thank you!

**New Members:** Laura Benner, Lancaster, PA; Barbara Staschiak, Kreamer; Coralynn Davis, Lewisburg

**Thank yous:** Joe Keller, Conservancy highway cleanup along Penns Creek: **Bucknell University baseball team** for property cleanup at Dale-Engle-Walker property.

**Susquehanna University incoming freshman** for property cleanup at Dale-Engle-Walker

**Donations:** Teri MacBride and Stephen Guattery; John and Ellen Gerdes; Cynthia Kessler, in memory of her nephew Jeff Bowers; Susanne Picado, in honor of Kim Daubman; Geoff Goodenow, in memory of Stephen Jacobsen

**Donations to our endowment from:** John and Susan Tonzetich, Marilyn Brill, Susan Warner Mills, Owen Floody, Warren and Chris Abrahamson in memory of their daughter Jill

**Tom Travis** as chief steward of the Dale's Ridge Trail, **Dale's Ridge Trail monitors** for 2019; our **easement monitors** for 2019

**Tom Duck** for assistance at Dale's Ridge Trail on many fronts; **Watsonstown Scout Troop 610** for Linn Trail cleanup

**Louise Knight**, for very generous donations to the Conservancy and to the Union County Historical Society, to replace badly weathered road signs noting the Dale-

Engle-Walker property and Dale's Ridge Trail. Replacement work to be done by PennDOT.

### **Building Our Endowment: Assuring Our Future**

Past Linn Conservancy president, Susan Warner-Mills, kicked off our Campaign to Sustain in 2018 with a tremendous and successful effort to establish and grow an endowment to support the Conservancy long-term. The fund continues to grow under management by the First Community Foundation of PA (FCFP) in Williamsport.

If interested in contributing to our endowment by way of gifts of any kind (monetary, stocks, real estate, for example) or if considering the Conservancy in your estate planning, please contact our office by email or phone for any desired assistance.

### **Thanks for Renewing**

Our thanks to all who have promptly replied to our November mailing of our membership renewal letter for 2020. Your support is vital to the fulfillment of our mission and shows your confidence in the work that we do. If you have yet to do so, and have misplaced our mailing, you may renew by using the form below to support Linn and/or BCWA, or use this link --

**<https://linnconservancy.org/support-us/donate/>** to access payment through PAYPAL on our website.

## **MEMBERSHIP FORM**

Detach and mail to Linn Conservancy, PO Box 501, Lewisburg, PA 17837

YES! I / we want to support the Linn Conservancy this year as a: Sponsor \$500\_\_\_\_\_

Supporter \$250 \_\_\_\_\_ Friend \$100 \_\_\_\_\_ Contributor \$50\_\_\_\_\_ Other\_\_\_\_\_

This is a contribution from \_\_\_\_\_ Individual\_\_\_\_\_ Family \_\_\_\_\_ Business

\_\_\_\_New membership \_\_\_\_\_ Renewal

I am also adding \$\_\_\_\_\_ to support the Buffalo Creek Watershed Alliance (BCWA)

Name(s)\_\_\_\_\_

Address\_\_\_\_\_

City\_\_\_\_\_ State\_\_\_\_\_ Zip\_\_\_\_\_

Home phone \_\_\_\_\_ Business phone\_\_\_\_\_

E-mail\_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Or pay via PayPal through our website — <https://linnconservancy.org/support-us/donate/>

If you are interested in making a separate contribution to the Linn Conservancy Endowment Fund, email [linn@ptd.net](mailto:linn@ptd.net) or call 570-524-8666.

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## Winter 2020

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The Linn Conservancy is a member of...



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