

1 A Forever Home
for Wildlife

4 Discovering Relics
from Deep Time

6 30,000
Live Stakes

8 Karen McGrath
New Board
Member



Linn Log

WINTER 2022

PHOTO: DIANE DONATO

A Forever Home for Wildlife *The Protected Stahl Property*

When Wayne Stahl approached the Merrill Linn Conservancy in 2014 to ask about creating a conservation easement on his 243-acre property in Buffalo Twp., there was little debate among the Conservancy's site/stewardship committee. The Stahl property was clearly a winner. It included a wealth of habitats—open fields, meadows, forest, and wetlands—as well as agricultural land. Bordering 80-acres of Ag Land preservation farmland, the property was in line with the Conservancy's Linking Landscapes Initiative. But,

the diversity of wildlife that lives, breeds, and moves through the property made the site extraordinary. For example, an October 2015 survey of the property reported 150 plant species and more than 80 native and transient bird species.

In the family since 1947, Wayne was born, raised, and has lived his entire life on the property. The possible destruction of this wildlife habitat is unthinkable. Wayne's staunchest ally in the mission to preserve the land is his wife Nancy. The two met at a

singles dance in 2007, "and hit it off right off the bat," Wayne says. They quickly discovered they'd had very similar childhoods, both growing up in the country on small farms and sharing a love of the land. *(continued on page 3)*

"Wayne contemplated protecting this property for many years," Nancy says. "He took time, asked questions, and learned; but he always knew he wanted to preserve the land."

Linn Log WINTER 2022

Mission of the Merrill W. Linn
Land & Waterways Conservancy

To preserve and protect significant
ecological sites in Union, upper
Northumberland, and neighboring
counties and to engage the public
with conservation issues that affect
the health of our environment.

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The Merrill W. Linn Land and
Waterways Conservancy was founded
in April 1988 in memory of Merrill W.
Linn, a local attorney and avid out-
doorsman who spent much of his life
exploring the woods, streams, fields,
and byways surrounding his native
Lewisburg, and sharing that experience
and knowledge with others.

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Linking Landscapes drives land preservation goals

Thank you! Our gratitude is directed to all of you who have so generously given to the Merrill Linn Conservancy during our end-of-year membership renewal drive and throughout 2021. Your donations, membership renewals, new memberships, and thoughtful gift memberships for others support our plans and programs for 2022 in motion.

These include land preservation and acquisition objectives driven by our Linking Landscapes Initiative, which recognizes that biodiversity can only survive in places where plant and animal life has room to move, breed and feed. We feel compelled to act now, while opportunities still exist as loss and fragmentation of natural landscapes due to human activities will only continue.

We will pursue environmentally important properties that connect to other such sites with the objective of expanding wildlife habitat and promoting biodiversity. We will also restore damaged landscapes through sustained removal of invasive plants and replacement with native species, repair and enhance our existing trails, and find new ways to offer improved outdoor recreational opportunities for all.

Thank you our essential workers

We also send out our thanks to our volunteers—those essential workers who monitor protected properties, do the hard work of invasive plant removal, staff displays at community events, lead public engagement events, and many other activities. We will recognize these volunteers in upcoming issues and explore why they are motivated to donate their time and what the rewards are for them.

The Conservancy's Board of Directors understands what the term "working board" means and also deserve to be recognized. This 15-person Board of Directors is deeply committed to realizing our goals and bring with them a tremendous range of expertise—from law, technology, and finance to geology, biology, and many shades of environmental sciences.

In this issue...the Stahl property

Dale's Ridge, the Koons Trail, and Glacier Pools Preserve are Conservancy-protected, privately-owned properties, where the public is welcome to visit and walk the trails. Most of the ecologically significant properties protected by conservation



easement agreements do not offer public access. They are seen only by special arrangement with the property owners.

The 243-acre Stahl property in Buffalo Twp. is such a property. We visited Wayne and Nancy Stahl in on a sunny day in December when the weather fortunately was perfect for photography. Wayne built his property parcel by parcel. All this was done in the spirit of Linking Landscapes expanding his property's wildlife habitat acre by acre. Their story begins on the page one.

On page xx, geology student Olivia Bush reports on the Conservancy's Community Fossil Dig in Snyder County. And on page xx, read about the Chesapeake Conservancy's 2022 live stakes plans and a training session in the Montandon Wetland to prepare live stakes event organizers for leading harvesting and planting sessions.

A final 'thank you' to Susquehanna Life

We were excited to open the latest issue of *Susquehanna Life* to find "A Revolution in Learning," an article exploring the classroom-without-walls movement. The article leads off with a conversation with Claire Campbell, the Bucknell history professor who created the Nature's Explorers program and organizes its outdoor learning events many of which were held at Dale-Engle-Walker.

But sadly, the latest issue of *Susquehanna Life* is also the last. Rather than focus on the loss of this special publication, we want to thank Erica Shames and her team for all we learned about the many ways to experience nature in our region over the magazine's 29 years of publication. In the pages of *Susquehanna Life*, the outdoors was always presented as an integral part of living in Pennsylvania, not just an occasional diversion.

— Diane Donato, *President*



Home for Wildlife (continued:)

“I have no children to leave this place to,” Wayne says. “But we wanted to ensure this property, which is mostly wildlife habitat, always stays as it is with standing timber, native plants, all the critters, birds, and butterflies.”

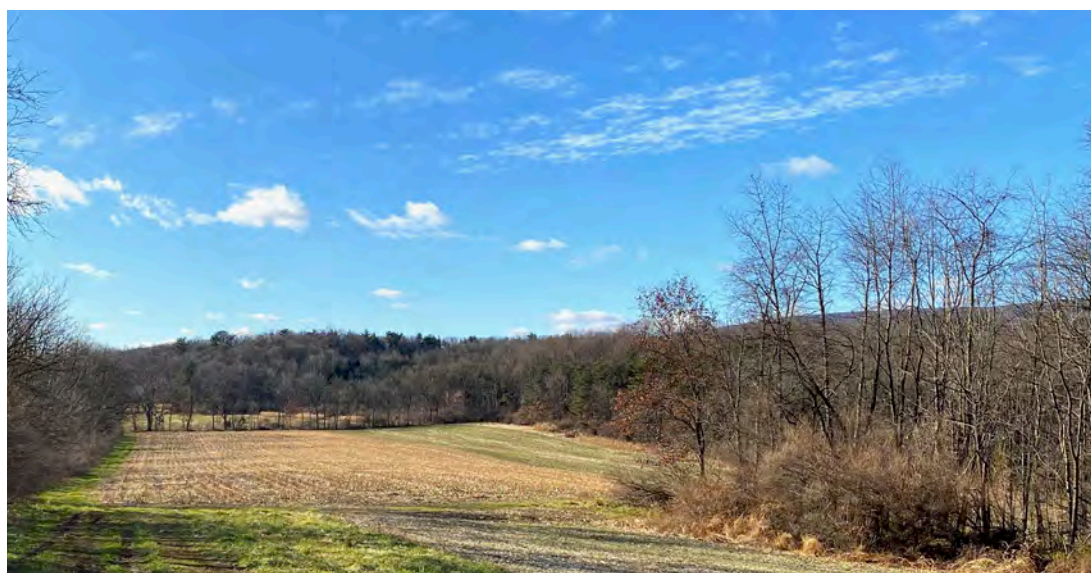
Over the years, the Stahls have received many offers to buy one or more of the three deeded parcels that now comprise the property. In the interest of preserving wildlife habitat, they have never considered the offers.

They understand the economic realities of farming in Union County. “The price of farmland makes it difficult for farmers to buy in Union County. Once they do, they need to utilize every inch of land to survive,” Nancy says. Timbering and removal of hedgerows and thickets maximizes farmable land, but eliminates wildlife habitat.

Current farm methods may also compromise wildlife habitat. “Very few farmers in this area let fodder stand,” Wayne says. “Most cut, chop, and bale it to feed stock. But, fodder is critical for wildlife in the winter.”

The objective of the Stahl property conservation easement, which was finalized in June 2016, is to foster old-growth forest, meadows, and wetland for wildlife habitat. It prohibits timbering and preserves the property’s tree-lined hedgerows.

The easement agreement also designates a 40-acre Velma M. Stahl Wildlife Sanctuary, in memory of Wayne’s mother, in which trails and hunting are prohibited. Under the woodland sanctuary lie deep



“Very few farmers in this area let fodder stand,” Wayne says....Most cut, chop, and bale it to feed stock. But, fodder is critical for wildlife in the winter.”

deposits of red sand, remnants of the last ice age. In wet years, a large and colorful display of mushrooms appears within the sanctuary.

Wayne has designated two areas as his butterfly fields where the Conservancy’s site/stewardship chair Allen Schweinsberg, identified 23 species in July 2015. A four-acre wetland on the eastern end

of the property is habitat for interesting plant species such as winterberry and buttonbush, a variety of amphibians, and both migratory and resident birds. “The first wildflowers appear on the property in April. As the season goes on there is always something new,” he says. “If Wayne had not protected the land, eventually this habitat and everything that lives here would be gone.” Nancy says. With the conservation easement in place, “someone else may buy the land, but the wildlife will inherit it,” she says. *The Stahls are planning for a spring event that will focus on life within the wetland area.*

Community Fossil Dig: Discovering Relics from Deep Time

Olivia Bush,
Bucknell Geology Student

Nestled on a hillside surrounded by farmland in Beaver Springs, Snyder County, Pennsylvania, a diverse assortment of marine fossils from the Paleozoic Era are just below the ground's surface waiting to be discovered.

On Sunday, October 24 several hundred people from surrounding counties and as far away as Reading and Lancaster came to explore the landscape and dig for fossils at the Linn Conservancy's Annual Community Fossil Dig.

Many people from the greater community who came with their families were directed and assisted by Bucknell Professor of Geology, Dr. Jeff Trop, a number of his colleagues, and students from his paleontology class.

As a student majoring in geology, I was fascinated by the abundance of brachiopods and crinoids at the site. Wherever I looked, I found myself wanting to take my hammer and find as many fully preserved fossils as possible.

The real excitement, though, was finding elusive trilobites, bivalves, gastropods, cephalopods, corals, and bryozoan fossils, all rare in central Pennsylvania. A couple of trilobite fossils were found, which gave some paleontology students extra credit.

The children at the dig were also quite engaged with the fossil collecting. I spoke with a boy and his younger brother who both wore safety goggles. They were thrilled to hit rocks with a hammer and chisel without getting yelled at by their parents.

Kids as young as three-years-old enjoyed the interactive fossil exhibit at the entrance and the geologic maps of Pennsylvania. Some children came with prior geology knowledge, while for others, it was their first experience learning about the earth's history through rocks.

The Linn Conservancy, in conjunction with Spring Township supervisors and staff, did a great ---how scientists use these remnants of ancient life to understand living organisms today, and how Earth environments have changed through time.

I felt I was able to impact my community positively as someone passionate about environmental advocacy and activism.

The Conservancy extends appreciation and thanks to the following who assisted in making the event a success: Drs. Mary Beth Gray and Ellen Chamberlin, Bucknell Geology and Environmental Geosciences Dept.; Dr. Chris Martine, Bucknell Dept. of Biology; Dr. Dave Broussard, Lycoming College Biology Dept. and Rose-Anna Baer, PA DCNR Geological Survey. Our thanks also to the Spring Twp. supervisors and their staff.



A young fossil hunter (above) stopped at an interactive display for a closer look at fossils from extinct trees dating to the relatively recent Oligocene/Miocene epoch—33.9 million years ago (Mya) to 5.3 Mya.

Displays at the fossil included a poster of common fossils of Pennsylvania (opposite page, upper left). Most fossils found at the Snyder County site are from the Devonian period—419.2 Mya, to 358.9 Mya. Dr. Trop pointed to drawings of Devonian fossils that could be found in the area.

(Upper right) Event organizers estimated close to 300 fossil enthusiasts attended. They scrambled up the hillside to stake out their territory.

(Lower right) A Bucknell geology student was well equipped for the dig with sturdy shoes, water bottle, and rock hammer.

(Lower left) This family laid out their finds on a white cloth. Many brought the family dog along for the hunt.



2022 Goal: 30,000 Live Stakes



The Chesapeake Conservancy plans to collect 30,000 live stakes in the coming months and they will need your help.

Live stakes are cuttings from wetland tree and shrub species, such as willows, buttonbush, and some species of dogwood. Their branches are removed so the stakes can be inserted directly into the soft soil of stream banks to grow entirely new trees or shrubs. Shannon Thomas, Chesapeake Conservancy's Live Stakes Coordinator, hosted training sessions in late December to prepare live stakes event organizers for harvesting and planting sessions. Live stakes harvesting sessions are planned for February 2, 9:00 a.m. at 500 Old Colony Rd., Selinsgrove, and February 3, 9:00 a.m., 160 Littleton Rd., Selinsgrove. Some 20 harvesting events will be scheduled from into March. To get involved, email Shannon at sthomas@chesapeakeconservancy.org.

MLC will post additional sessions as they become available. Or email sthomas@chesapeakeconservancy.org for more information. The Chesapeake Conservancy works in partnership with PA-DCNR, Susquehanna University, Bucknell University, and the Merril Linn Conservancy to collect and plant live stakes.



The bottoms of live stakes are cut on an angle; tops are cut straight across. The yellow paint indicates species—button bush here. The stakes will go into temperature-controlled storage until planted in the spring. (Middle) The Chesapeake Conservancy's Frank Rohrer hands off buttonbush cuttings to Geoff Goodenow, MLC's coordinator. (Bottom) The cuttings are trimmed of twigs and small branches.



Nature's Explorers events continued into the fall and will re- turn with a great roster of programs for March through July 2022, according to Claire Campbell, who conceived and organized the programs. This past October, children learned why maps are made, what they are used for, and how perspective, orientation, and scale influence map-making. (below right) Children made their own maps of the Dale's Ridge property.

In November, children tested a hypothesis studying rock/fossil properties using magnifiers, magnets, nails, and dilute acid. One young explorer (left) turned his eye to a stone used in building the Dale-Engle-Walker house.

(below left) A fossil found in the stone.



Sale of plein air paintings nets \$837



Thank you Simonne Roy for a great idea perfectly realized! As an expression of gratitude for the Conservancy's land preservation work and co-sponsorship of the annual Plein Air event, Simonne offered to donate 50 percent of the proceeds from sales of three paintings created at the Dale-Engle-Walker property during the 2021 Plein Air event—if sold by November 1. Happily, all three paintings found homes before the deadline and the Conservancy has gratefully received a check for \$837.50 from Simonne.



The Living Landscapes program sponsored by the Bucknell Humanities Center, Lewisburg Neighborhoods, and the Conservancy, explores the relationship between people and nature. It kicked off in early November at the **Koons Trail** where **Prof. Jeff Trop** (second from left) spoke to the property's interesting ecological and historical features.

New Members

Dominic Scicchitano, Karen Wolf, Daniel Hyde,
Lewisburg;
Jennifer Hoffmaster Mifflinburg

Diane Timms, Emily Mrusko, Adam and Marijane Hackenburg family, a gift membership from **Peggy Lauver;**

Nancy Ruhl, a gift membership from **Jeannette Lasansky,**

Thank You

Special Gifts

John Grim and Mary Evelyn Tucker in honor of
Warren Abrahamson

Warren and Chris Abrahamson, donation to our endowment
in memory of their daughter, Jill

Simonne Roy, donation of proceeds from sale of art work
featuring scenes from Dale's Ridge

The many **Merrill Linn Conservancy supporters** who have
renewed their membership support with generous donations

Many volunteers

Allen Schweinsberg: many years of organizing the annual
Lewisburg Christmas Bird Count and cataloging and analyzing the results.

Julianna Cooper, Beth Capaldi: staffing display

Michelle Heller: Demonstration at Student Plein Air event

Marilyn Murphy: donations, native garden support, and many
other contributions over the years

Boy Scout Troop 538: weeding at Dale-Engle-Walker property

Missionaries of the Church of Latter-day Saints: highway
cleanup, work at Dale-Engle-Walker

Joe Keller: highway cleanup



Lewisburg area art students exercised their painting skills at a Student Plein Air event held at Dale-Engle-Walker in October. Our thanks to artist Michelle Heller for presenting plein air workshops at the event.

For Your Calendar

Wednesday, February 2, 9:00 a.m. Participate in
Chesapeake Conservancy Live Stakes harvesting
session at 500 Old Colony Rd., Selinsgrove. For more
information Contact Shannon Thomas at (stthomas@
chesapeakeconservancy.org).

Thursday, February 3, 9:00 a.m. Chesapeake Conservancy Live Stakes harvesting session at 160 Littleton Rd., Selinsgrove.

Wednesday & Thursday, March 9 & 10
Raise the Region fundraising event

Month of April :
Buffalo Creek Watershed Alliance
20th Birthday



Karen McGrath Joins MLC Board

Karen M. McGrath, Bucknell assistant professor of finance, has been elected to the Merrill Linn Conservancy board of directors. With both M.S. and Ph.D degrees in finance/real estate McGrath brings extensive experience in the financial services industry. "My Ph.D and primary research area revolve around green real estate/building in an attempt to help mitigate some of the

damage that development renders. I have always believed strongly in the need to protect our land and natural resources," McGrath says. McGrath, who grew up tent camping and visiting national parks, has had a lifelong appreciation for the outdoors and nature. Her family has been involved with conservation easements that have resulted in protection of vital farmland and open spaces in Montgomery County. "I want to serve the Conservancy,

Linn Conservancy Seeks Operations Manager

The Merrill Linn Conservancy is seeking applicants for an Operations Manager position, who will work full-time to modernize and optimize our operations tasks, among other duties. The new hire will be given broad autonomy, creating a smoothly running non-profit that manages donors, volunteers, social media, marketing, and financial processes.

Job description and application details are posted at various job sites including <https://weconservepa.org/jobs/operations-manager/>