

A word from Wildwood

The goal of Friends of Wildwood is to preserve and support Wildwood Park and the Benjamin O'Levine III Nature Center.

Visitation Soared in 2025

The Nature Center tallied 34,199 visitors—the highest since 2019—and the Towpath Trail had 125,206 outdoor visitors. Staff are excited to see these numbers level out since Covid-19 and are anticipating even more for 2026!

Bird Safe Harrisburg

Saturday, March 7 from 1:00 pm – 2:00 pm

Free

Join Appalachian Audubon Society to learn about their Bird Safe Harrisburg initiative. A major component of this initiative is a bird collision monitoring program which aims to identify the timing of collisions, what bird species are most affected and what buildings in Harrisburg are most deadly. Attendees will learn about the preliminary conclusions from 2025, how to make their home or business bird-safe, and, if interested, how to volunteer for the program to help save birds. Pre-registration is not required for this program.



Explore Wildwood Park's treasured wetlands for our 26th Annual Wetlands Festival! Join us Saturday, **April 25 from 10:00 am—4:00 pm** for free, fun and educational activities with special musical guests: Joe Pye and Neidig & Koretzky and food trucks: Williams Catering and TO Espresso. Enjoy wildlife exhibits and learn from a wide variety of local and regional environmental organizations. Interact with live animals from Miller's Wildlife and Conservation Specialists and make crafts to take home. Participate in guided walks throughout the day led by experienced volunteers. There is something for everyone to enjoy! Check out the Wetlands Festival tab on our website for the full schedule of events!

2026 Guided Walks

All walks meet in front of the Nature Center.

-8:00 am Bird Walk with Kevin Shannon, *Appalachian Audubon Society and Wildwood Park Volunteer*

-10:00 am Bird Walk with Glenn Mitzel, *Appalachian Audubon Society and Wildwood Park Volunteer*

-11:00 am Wildflower Walk with Jane Earle, *Wildwood Park Volunteer*

-1:00 pm Tree Walk with Eric O'Neal, *Goods Tree & Lawn Care Arborist*

Wild About Dogs

Don't forget to bring your furry friends and join the Friends of Wildwood at their FIFTH annual dog-friendly event on Saturday, May 9 from 10:00 am–2:00 pm. This year, the Friends would like to extend a special invitation to all current Friends of Wildwood Dog Members. There will be human food, homemade pet treats, vendors, demonstrations, dog photo ops, raffle baskets, information on pet-centered vendors in the area and much more! This program is free to attend; please make sure to have all dogs leashed for the duration of the event. See you there tongue out, tail wagging!



America250

Did you know our nation will celebrate its 250th birthday this July? In light of that, special programs will be offered within the Dauphin County Parks System to highlight our rich heritage and commemorate this historical milestone for our country. Stay informed by visiting explorewildwoodpark.org and forthunter.org for a full list of the summer's celebrations!



Project Updates

Wildwood Trail and Site Improvements are planned to take place this summer and fall. Improvements include renovation of a section of Wildwood Way Trail on the east side of the Park; streambank stabilization measures to help prevent erosion and protect the boardwalks; improved ADA access to trails and other site improvements.

The streambank stabilization is Phase 1A of the Wildwood Restoration Project.

Support this project at explorewildwoodpark.org, click on Support!

A Word from the President

The Best of Spring is at Wildwood.

Well, most of the groundhogs said this year's winter will last a bit longer, but late winter and early spring at Wildwood is a truly special time as the Park awakens with warmer days and a renewed display of color and life. Wildflowers will appear and migratory birds will return with their songs. Inside the Nature Center, visitors can explore exhibits that showcase the unique habitats and wildlife of Wildwood. Spring also brings new Art In The Wild installations throughout the Park showcasing the talents of local environmental artists. You won't want to miss this year's exhibit. And don't miss all of the other planned activities and programs offered at the Park this Spring. They are all listed on Wildwood's website explorewildwoodpark.org.

As the weather warms, visitors to Wildwood will also observe a multitude of Park improvement projects underway. Please know that some of these projects are the result of the support, activities and fund-raising efforts of the Friends of Wildwood. Supporting the Friends has the goals of maintaining the beauty and safety of the Park as well as many of the programs and activities everyone enjoys. If you encounter any of these improvement projects over the coming months, please be respectful of the necessary (and temporary) disruption to trails, paths, etc. and especially the workers and their equipment.

If you are a member of the Friends, THANK YOU for helping to support all of this Park activity! If not, please consider joining the Wildwood family and help to continue the momentum. Membership is easy to obtain on the Park's website or by visiting the Benjamin Olewine III Nature Center. We look forward to welcoming you.

See you at Wildwood,
Jim

2025 Volunteer Summary

It's hard to believe we topped 2024, but we sure did! Nearly 6,000 volunteer hours were contributed by Wildwood Park Volunteers in 2025. That total was made possible by the efforts of 67 individual volunteers and representatives from 12 different groups of volunteers, in addition to 8 Volunteer Work Days. Thank you all for lending us your time and talents! These hours equate to nearly \$200,000 contributed freely to the Park. It's safe to say there's much to look forward to in 2026.

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Friends of Wildwood

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Wildwood Park and the Benjamin Olewine III Nature Center are part of the Dauphin County Parks and Recreation Department. The Benjamin Olewine III Nature Center is open Tuesday through Sunday, 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. and is closed Mondays and holidays. Wildwood Park's trails are open from dawn until dusk. Programs can be viewed at explorewildwoodpark.org/events and questions directed to wwstaff@dauphincounty.gov

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Photo Contest Results

The 2025 Friends of Wildwood Photo Contest displayed 121 photographs this year. Photographers in 3 categories, Youth, Beginner, and Experienced, showcased their best shots of the flora and fauna of our Dauphin County Parks. On December 14, the winning photographs were announced and photographers accepted their prizes. A very big thank you to all of the entrants and congratulations to the winners!

Experienced

- 1st: Venkataram Venkatakrishnaiah, "Takes Two to Make a Home"
- 2nd: Chris Heisey, "Making Swallows"
- 3rd: Joe Mastroppolito, "Eye on You"

Beginner

- 1st: Suzanne Smith, "Lunch Time!"
- 2nd: Suzanne Smith, "Birds of a Feather"
- 3rd: Michelle Davies, "Bad Hair Day"

Youth

- 1st: Lydia Lubold-Skema, "Back to the Ice Age"
- 2nd: Elizabeth Salkin, "Sunset Paradise"
- 3rd: Elizabeth Salkin, "Chungus"

People's Choice

- Experienced: Sherri Hendricks, "Tastes Like Chicken"
- Beginner (tie): Nancy Laven, "Mom, When is it My Turn" & Patty Marshall, "Puffed and Poised"
- Youth: Elizabeth Salkin, "Chungus"

Winning photos, including People's Choice selections, will be on display in the Nature Center over the next few months. Please stop by the Center to view these beautiful photographs. We thank our dedicated judges Troy Bynum, Andrew Gehman and Ellen M. Siddons for their time and expertise.

If you're interested in improving your photography skills in order to participate in the 2026 Friends of Wildwood Photo Contest, consider attending an Adult or Youth Intro to Wildlife Photography Workshop on Saturday, May 16. *More on page 5.*

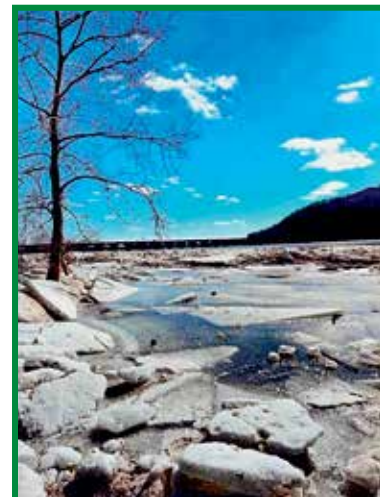
2025 First Place Winners



Experienced: Venkataram Venkatakrishnaiah
Takes Two to Make a Home



Beginner: Suzanne Smith
Lunch Time!



Youth: Lydia Lubold-Skema
Back to the Ice Age

Art In The Wild

The 2026 Art In the Wild Exhibit Opens Sunday, March 29. Visit the naturally inspired trailside creations along Wildwood Park's wandering trails and wetlands from 1:00 pm–3:00 pm on the 29th and **Meet the Artists.** Using mostly natural materials, artists have constructed large and small installations. This year's theme is "Balance." A map-brochure about the exhibit will be available online, at the kiosks or inside the Nature Center.

Wildwood Exclusive Jigsaw Puzzle

Have you ever noticed the large painting hanging in the Nature Center Exhibit Hall – just to the right of the large metal gates? The painting is an enlarged reproduction of a Bruce Johnson Original that was commissioned for the opening of the Nature Center in 1999.

Through special arrangements with Mr. Johnson, the painting has been remade into a 16"x 20" jigsaw puzzle which for sale in the Nature Shop. This is a Nature Shop exclusive that can't be found anywhere else. It is a true collector's item that illustrates Wildwood Park in Mr. Johnson's characteristic humorous style.



Central Pennsylvania residents may recall that Mr. Johnson maintained an art gallery of his works in Hershey for a number of years and has exhibited his work throughout the world. Wildwood is fortunate to have been able to reproduce his painting into the puzzle that will provide fun for any puzzle enthusiast or friend of Wildwood.

The proceeds from sales of the puzzle will, along with all of the other items in the Shop, benefit the programs and activities of the Friends of Wildwood.

Bat Box

A big thank you to Jack Buckwalter for donating a new, well fabricated bat box! This particular bat box is destined to go up along the Delta Boardwalk. Bats are best viewed in Wildwood in late summer at dusk with an open view of the sky.

Species Spotlight: Brown Creeper

This bird, although smaller, resembles a Nuthatch. It can be seen creeping up and down a tree trunk with erratic, short, jerky motions. Creepers have anisodactyl feet meaning they have 3 toes that face forward and 1 long toe that extends backward specifically adapted for vertical climbing. While they often forage alongside woodpeckers, the Creeper's anatomy is distinct, utilizing its stiff tail for support. Streaked brown wings with white breast, usually hidden against a tree trunk, helps them to easily camouflage with the bark. These birds are solitary and feed on a variety of insects and spiders gleaned from bark crevices using their curved bills. Brown Creeper nests are hammock-shaped structures built behind



Photo: Larry Imes

large, peeling slabs of bark on dead or dying trees. In our woods, shagbark hickory trees fit the bill! The nest is built 5–15 feet above the ground. They are constructed from twigs, moss, and spider egg cases, lined with feathers and soft materials. Recently, a few solitary individuals have been spotted on the trees outside the Bird Viewing Area.

Educator Workshop: Growing Up Wild!

Discover the diversity of PA's plants, animals and habitats on Tuesday, March 17 from 1:00 pm–3:00 pm. Growing UP WILD is an award-winning early childhood education program that offers a wide range of activities and experiences that foster lifelong social and academic skills while exploring the natural world. This workshop is for all formal and non-formal educators who work with children ages 3 to 7 and are interested in the environment. All participants will receive the Growing UP WILD Activity guide. Act 48 is provided to PA certified teachers. A simple afternoon snack will be provided. Pre-registration required. Register online. Cost is \$15 per participant.



Winter Cleaning

Does it look brighter in the Nature Center?... It should! Wildwood Staff spent three days in early January deep cleaning the mounted specimens and diorama displays in the Exhibit Hall. Thanks to the help of our co-worker Katie Sciamanna, Part-time History Educator at Fort Hunter Park, knowledge was gained and new skills developed to properly maintain these areas and ensure they receive their due attention each year.

Upcoming Events

Online Registration!

Program registration is online at explorewildwoodpark.org/events/
It's easy! Click on the "Events" page, scroll through the list of programs, click to register.

Cat In The Hat Learning Series

Wednesdays, March 4, 11 & 18

10:00 am – 10:45 am

\$5 per child, chaperones free

Stories, rhymes, and a craft/activity will introduce science through the eyes of the Cat In The Hat for ages 3-5. Each participant will go home with the book that was read that session thanks to Altrusa of South Central PA. Register online.

Birds & Coffee

Saturdays, March 14 & April 11

10:00 am – 11:00 am

Free

Stop by the Nature Center Bird Viewing Area for a warm cup of bird-friendly coffee, tea or hot cocoa with Appalachian Audubon Society. Discover what birds visit our feeders while participating in Project FeederWatch. Pre-registration not required.

Volunteer Work Days

Saturdays, March 14 & April 11

10:00 am – 1:00 pm

Free

Kick off the spring season with litter clean up in March. For the April Work day, tools and work gloves will be provided for a chance to focus on other park projects. Register online

Spring Wreath Workshop

Saturday, March 14

8:30 am, 12:00 pm & 1:45 pm

\$30 per wreath

Decorate a spring wreath out of natural materials. Everything will be supplied to make a wreath with decorations from nature, including cones, nuts and seed pods. Select from a variety of wreath bases including grape vines and wire frames. Register online.

Bird Walks

Wednesday, March 18

8:00 am – 10:00 am

Free

Meet Rick and Peggy Price in the South Parking Lot at the entrance to the Towpath Trail for this early migration bird walk.

Wednesday, April 29

7:30 am – 9:30 am

Free

Meet Rick and Peggy Price at the Nature Center Parking Lot to search for spring migrants. This can be the best walk of the year when it comes to the variety of species seen. Register online.

Kids Discover: Rabbits and Hares (Ages 5-10)

Friday, April 3

10:00 am – 12:00 pm

\$5 per child, chaperones are free

Join a Naturalist and explore the world of rabbits and hares, examine their differences and similarities, their many different habitats, and discover their superpowers. Participants will even get to meet a live rabbit! Register online.

Intro to Woodburning

Saturday, April 4

10:00 am – 12:00 pm & 1:00 pm – 3:00 pm

\$35 per participant

Each participant will receive an 8 inch diameter tree cookie of their choice to woodburn using a wide variety of nature stencils. Woodburning supplies and instruction will be provided. Leave with a one-of-a-kind piece of art for your home. Register online.



Kids Discover: Salamanders (Ages 8-12)

Thursday, April 16

2:00 pm – 4:00 pm

\$5 per child, chaperones are free

Learn all about secretive salamanders and what makes them unique. Go for a short hike to search for them and see if you can catch one- they are slimy and fast. You may get wet and muddy, so dress accordingly. Register online.

Introduction to Birdwatching

Saturday, April 18

10:00 am – 12:00 pm

Free

Join Rick and Peggy Price for an introductory course on birdwatching. Learn the basics with an indoor PowerPoint presentation followed by a short walk outdoors on the Delta Boardwalk to practice using binoculars and identifying bird calls. Each participant will receive a free bird guide to help jumpstart their repertoire. Register online.

Wild Recipes: Spring Foraging in Your Backyard

Tuesday, May 5

6:00 pm – 8:30 pm

\$10 per participant

Curious about edible plants and how to utilize them to create yummy spring recipes? Join Naturalists at Wildwood Park to learn how to cook a light lunch using a few spring ephemerals. Register online.

Shiitake Mushroom Log Workshop

Thursday, May 14

6:00 pm – 8:00 pm

\$25 per participant

Join Brian Scott of Deep Hollow Forest Farms for an evening workshop. Brian will provide background on mushroom logs and the process of their creation. Participants will then use an oak log to create their own take-home mushroom log. This program is for participants 18 years or older. Register online.



Intro to Wildlife Photography for Adults

Saturday, May 16

10:00 am – 12:00 pm

\$25 per participant

Join Troy Bynum, owner of TB Wildlife Photography, for this workshop, perfect for beginners and seasoned photographers alike and will cultivate the skills needed to capture images with your unique artistic flair. Participants should bring a camera with user manual or smart phone for use during the hands-on portions. This workshop is open for ages 16+. Register online.

Intro to Wildlife Photography for Youth (Ages 10-15)

Saturday, May 16

1:00 pm – 2:30 pm

\$20 per participant

Join Troy Bynum, for an exciting photography workshop and discover how to take amazing pictures with any camera—even your smart phone! Participants should bring a camera with user manual or smart phone for use during the hands-on portions. Register online.

Kids Discover: Insects (Ages 5-10)

Sunday, May 17

1:00 pm – 3:00 pm

\$5 per child, chaperones are free

Discover what makes insects so important in our environment. Become an insect detective and take a closer look at them using nets, magnifiers and bug boxes. Wear sneakers or other closed-toed shoes and dress to explore! Meet at the North Lot Pavilion to walk $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile to the Meadow Loop. Register online.

String Art Workshop

Saturday, May 30

10:00 am – 11:30 am

\$40 per participant

Join Horst Arts in the Olewine Pavilion to create your own string art! You will be supplied with a 7" x 7" pine board which you can choose to stain or paint. Then select from three nature-themed templates that will show you exactly where to hammer in your nails—or create a design of your own creation! When your nails are in place, it will be time to add the string. All tools and materials will be supplied. This workshop is for ages 13 and up. Register online.



Volunteer Spotlight: Hugo Zapata

Hugo has been coming to Wildwood for walks with his son for years. When his son was 4, they looked for places to spend time together and they found Wildwood. It was close by and safe and turned out to be a favorite spot for them both. Since then, they've never stopped coming back. Their favorite walk is the full 3.1 mile loop which Hugo sometimes does multiple times on his visit. Hugo walks the trails now with his dog Baby (pictured below). She likes to walk the East Shore Trail since she enjoys the woods and playing in the snow.

He worked for Excel Logistics on Industrial Road where he acquired his CDL license. He saw a posting for a CDL driver for the County and he transferred to the Recycling Center. During his time with Dauphin County at the Recycling Center, he drove the recycling trucks and worked on the loading and unloading dock receiving various materials and electronics to be recycled. Have you heard of Dauphin County's Recycling Center located off Cameron Street in Harrisburg? The center recycles Styrofoam, most electronics, televisions, AC units and refrigerators. Some items can be donated for free; others incur a small fee associated with their drop off.

For almost 20 years he and his son, now age 26, have spent their time at various volunteer work days giving back to the Park. They participate most consistently at the first volunteer work day of each year at the Litter Clean-Up events on the second Saturday in March. They've also pulled weeds and helped plant trees over the years.



Hugo enjoys coming to the Park because it's such an easy way to get your steps in! He expressed how much he appreciates seeing the animals so free, roaming around as they please and within such close proximity to the City. It's just amazing. Even the squirrels are living free in nature here.

In closing Hugo wanted to stress teaching children at a young age the importance of picking up after themselves. They wouldn't leave litter lying around in their house; they would clean that up. It should be the same in the outdoors. If you have something in your hand, please wait until you come upon the next receptacle. We can all be stewards of nature if people of all kinds and all different groups work together to do their part. You can do your part too! Consider attending our Litter Clean-Up on Saturday, March 14. More on Page 5. Let's help keep Wildwood Park beautiful!

Flower Walks & Seasonal Garden Walks

Did you know volunteer Jane Earle leads a flower walk at Wildwood Park once a month in the spring and summer? Continued for 2026, participants who pre-register and attend any flower walk this year will be entered into a raffle with the chance to win a wildflower-themed gift basket from the Nature Shop courtesy of the Friends of Wildwood.

Flower Walk: Earliest Bloomers

Sunday, March 22

1:30 pm - 3:00 pm

Free

Seek out Skunk Cabbage along the North Boardwalk. Meet in front of the Nature Center.

Flower Walk: Spring Arrivals

Sunday, April 12

1:30 pm - 3:00 pm

Free

Search for the infamous spring ephemerals along the Towpath Trail. Meet at the South Lot Parking area. Learn interesting facts and how to identify these common species.

Flower Walk: Jack in the Pulpits and Other Spring Flowers

Sunday, May 24

10:00 am - 11:30 am

Free

Look for Jack in the Pulpits along the North Boardwalk. Meet in front of the Nature Center.

New in 2026, Seasonal Garden Walks led by Penn State Extension Master Gardener Kevin Kelly in the spring, summer and fall. Each walk will highlight what's in bloom, along with shrubs, foliage, structure and other seasonal features that give the garden interest and support wildlife. Learn as you walk among the plants in the Nature Center gardens.

Seasonal Garden Walks

Thursdays, April 23 & June 11

9:30 am - 11:00 am

Free

Meet in front of the Nature Center.

Thursday, May 21

9:30 am - 11:00 am

Free

Meet at the South Lot Parking Area.

Beginner Friendly Watercolor Class

Please join the Friends of Wildwood on Saturday, April 11 from 10am-12pm for a Beginner Watercolor Class, directed by Summer Malpass from Key on Paper. Summer will lead participants through the creation a dragonfly-themed painting! All experience levels are welcome, and all materials will be provided. Workshop limited to 30 participants age 12 and over. Proceeds benefit the Friends of Wildwood. Pre-registration is required. Register online. **Cost is \$40 for Members, \$45 for Non-Members. Discount Code: Dragonfly**



Deer Exclosure Study Site

A collaborative effort is underway to create a 25 x 25 foot deer exclosure study site in Wildwood Park. This is a collective effort carefully planned by Friends of Wildwood Natural Resource Committee, Park Staff and a prospective Eagle Scout.

The purpose is to research the effects deer browse has on habitat. The fence will be located just off Tall Timbers Trail in an area typically rich with diverse wildflower species.



Dutchman's Breeches

Interested in sponsoring this deer exclosure study site? Email wwstaff@dauphincounty.gov to find out how to help make this a reality.

Stock Transfer Gifts to Friends of Wildwood

There are many ways to give to Friends of Wildwood including: membership dues, memorial brick purchases, program sponsorships and general donations. Did you know 100% of all gifts to Friends of Wildwood directly benefit Wildwood Park?!

Friends of Wildwood now accept gifts in the form of stock transfers and mutual fund transfers. If you're interested in learning more, please contact Chris at crebert@dauphincounty.gov or calling 717-221-4372.

Show your support for Wildwood Park by sporting some Wildwood-themed apparel! Order at your convenience from our online store at <https://bit.ly/3LwL1uk>

Orders will take 2 weeks to process and will be available for pick-up at the Nature Center after email confirmation or shipped to you for additional costs. All sales are final and all proceeds directly benefit the projects and programs sponsored by the Friends of Wildwood.



Ways to Give

All are tax deductible



Online

Visit explorewildwoodpark.org/donate-now



Cash or Check



Sponsor a Program



Become a Member

Or give the gift of membership



Bequest, Endowment, Stock Transfer



Memorial Bricks

Remember a friend, or loved one



Volunteer Your Time

Membership Benefits

Your membership supports the ongoing programs and conservation efforts of Wildwood Park and the Benjamin Olewine III Nature Center.

Your Membership provides the following:

- Reciprocal membership with more than 100 nature centers throughout the country that participate in the Association of Nature Center Administrators
- Subscription to *A Word From Wildwood* quarterly newsletter
- 10% discount off all Nature Shop purchases
- Members only discounts on special events

Knowing you:

- Support outdoor educational and recreational opportunities reaching over 100,000 people annually
- Have a direct impact on local and migratory wildlife, wild plants and the diverse people living in our community
- Preserve Wildwood Park, now and for future generations

A Word from Wildwood can be sent electronically to Friends of Wildwood members. Email wwstaff@dauphincounty.gov and request electronic version only.



Interested in receiving weekly emails on programming in all Dauphin County Parks? Scan this QR code with your smartphone and click on the yellow "E-Newsletter Sign-Up" Button.

The Friends of Wildwood is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization listed with the PA Bureau of Charitable Organizations, and incorporated within the Commonwealth of PA. It is an advocate for Wildwood Park through preservation, education and financial support.

Friends of Wildwood
100 Wildwood Way
Harrisburg, PA 17110
(717) 221-0292
explorewildwoodpark.org

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Mark your calendars for
these upcoming events!

Beginner Friendly
Watercolor Class
Sat. April 11
10:00am—12:00pm

Wetlands Festival
Sat. April 25
10:00am—4:00pm

Wild About Dogs
Event
Sat. May 9
10:00am—2:00pm



30% Recycled post-consumer
fiber