



Sourlands Journal

www.sourland.org

Newsletter of the Sourland Planning Council

Autumn 2011

COVER STORY

The Candidates and the Mountain

THE QUESTIONS

1. Do you know about and do you support the work of the appointed representatives of the five Townships (East Amwell, Hillsborough, Hopewell, Montgomery, and West Amwell) in developing a Comprehensive Management Plan for the Sourlands?
2. Do you feel the current level of Open Space funding in your municipality should (a) be increased; (b) stay the same; or (c) be decreased or partially redirected for other purposes? How is this funding derived – from an Open Space tax, from your capital funds, or other?
3. Briefly describe what you would like voters to know about your attitude and past involvement with the preservation of open space, wildlife habitat, natural resources, and/or places of historical significance in your Township.

THE GOAL

In order to inform our members of the candidates' stands on issues important to the Sourland region, the Sourland Planning Council has sent the questions above to the candidates for office in the election this November 8th in the three counties and five municipalities with jurisdiction over the Sourlands. We will be posting their responses on the SPC website (sourland.org), as well as the names of the candidates who do not respond.

THE CANDIDATES

Hunterdon County

County Freeholder

- (R) Rob Walton
- (D) Andrea Bonette

East Amwell Township Committee

- (D) Pat Cregar
- (D) Dart Sageser
- (R) Doreen Holley
- (R) Ronald Wielenta

West Amwell Township Committee

- (R) Thomas Molnar
- (No Democratic candidate filed)

Mercer County

County Freeholder

- (D) Lucylle Walter
- (D) John Cimino
- (R) Dion Clark
- (R) David Maher

And for the unexpired term:

- (D) Samuel Frisby, Sr.
- (R) James Castelize III

Hopewell Township Committee

- R) Todd Brant
- R) Ashley Kerr
- (D) Vanessa Sandom
- (D) Allen Cannon

Somerset County

County Freeholder

- (R) Peter Palmer
- (R) Robert Zaborowski
- (D) Iorwese Ifan
- (D) Christian Mastondrea

Hillsborough Township Committee

- (D) Aldo Martinez
- (D) John Reddan
- (R) Gloria McCauley
- (R) Douglas Tomson

Montgomery Township Committee

- (R) Rich Smith
- (D) Mark Petraske

The Sourland Planning Council is a non-profit organization working to protect the ecological integrity, historic resources and special character of the Sourland Mountain region.

Sourland Planning Council

Meeting information

Sourland Planning Council trustee's meetings are held on the first Monday of even months at the train station in Hopewell Boro. You are warmly invited.

December 5

Executive Director

Tamara Garaffa, Montgomery Twp.
director@sourland.org
908 428-4216

Officers

President: Cliff Wilson,
Montgomery Twp.

Vice President: Jennifer Bryson,
Hillsborough Twp.

Treasurer: Andrea Bonette,
East Amwell Twp.

Secretary: Tom Kilbourne,
Hopewell Twp.

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Tracy Carluccio, East Amwell Twp.
Dr. Charles Clark, Hillsborough Twp.
Debbie Fabricatore, Hillsborough Twp.
Marion Fenwick, Hillsborough Twp.
Caroline Katmann, Hillsborough Twp.
Jared Rosenbaum, Hillsborough Twp.
Patricia Sziber, Hopewell Twp.
Peg Van Patton, Hillsborough Twp.

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Sourlands Journal Editor

Steven Davison

COMMENT

Message from the President



Quarry Rezoning

The large quarry on the eastern edge of Sourland Mountain, formerly owned by 3M, is now owned and operated by Gibraltar Rock, a Silvi Group company. The quarry is by far the largest break in the Sourland forest. It contains the infamous “fines pile” – an enormous heap of rock dust that was a byproduct of the previous owner’s manufacturing process and which, though technically “capped,” continues to generate runoff into nearby streams, sometimes turning them milky gray after major rainstorms. The very presence of the quarry in the midst of the forest represents a stiff challenge to the delicate Sourland ecosystem.

As long as the quarry owners operate within state guidelines, they have every right to run their business. However, several months ago, Gibraltar asked Hillsborough Township to revise the zoning around the quarry to permit expansion. Gibraltar asked for some changes in both the Quarry zone and the Mountain Conservation zone, resulting in a net transfer of more than 25 acres away from the Conservation zone and into the Quarry zone.

Needless to say, this was not acceptable to the Sourland Planning Council. Our Board of Trustees voted to do whatever we could to prevent the rezoning.

Trustee Peg Van Patten was part of a group of neighbors who organized to oppose the expansion. She did a lot of research that helped the group prepare its case against the rezoning. Separately, I also did some research and helped the neighbors plan for political action.

Our case was very strong; indeed, the more research we did, the clearer it became that there was no way the Township could justify approval of this rezoning. The proposal was contrary to specific language in the Township’s Master Plan and the ordinances that created the Quarry zone and the Mountain Conservation zone. The proposal violated state wetlands protections. And the stated justification for the changes was completely without merit. I began to worry that some back-room deal might have been struck, for there seemed to be no way this proposal could have proceeded as far as it had on its own merits.

And then one morning I was in the Hillsborough Planning Office to look at some documents, and was told I needn’t bother, as Gibraltar had asked that the proposal be withdrawn. The fight we had been preparing for was not going to happen – at least not yet.

A few weeks ago I met with Uday Patankar, Vice President of Environmental and Public Affairs of the Silvi Group. He said the

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(continued from previous page) company had withdrawn its request when it heard of the neighbors' opposition. However, he refused to rule out the possibility of pursuing expansion of the quarry in the future.

The Silvi Group cares about its reputation in the communities where it does business. It makes contributions to worthy community organizations and says the right things in regard to the environment. I very much hope the company turns out to be the green good neighbor it proclaims itself to be.

SPC does not wish to be in an adversarial relationship with Gibraltar Rock or any other stakeholder in the Sourlands. We want to work together with homeowners, businesses and government entities to protect the Mountain. At the same time, we will not hesitate to use every resource available to us to prevent activities that are detrimental to the Sourlands, and any expansion of the Gibraltar facility beyond the existing Quarry zone certainly falls into that category.

Cliff Wilson, President

COMMENT

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by *Cliff Wilson, President of SPC* | I very much hope the Silvi Group, owner of the Gibraltar Rock quarry on the mountain, turns out to be the good green neighbor it proclaims itself to be.

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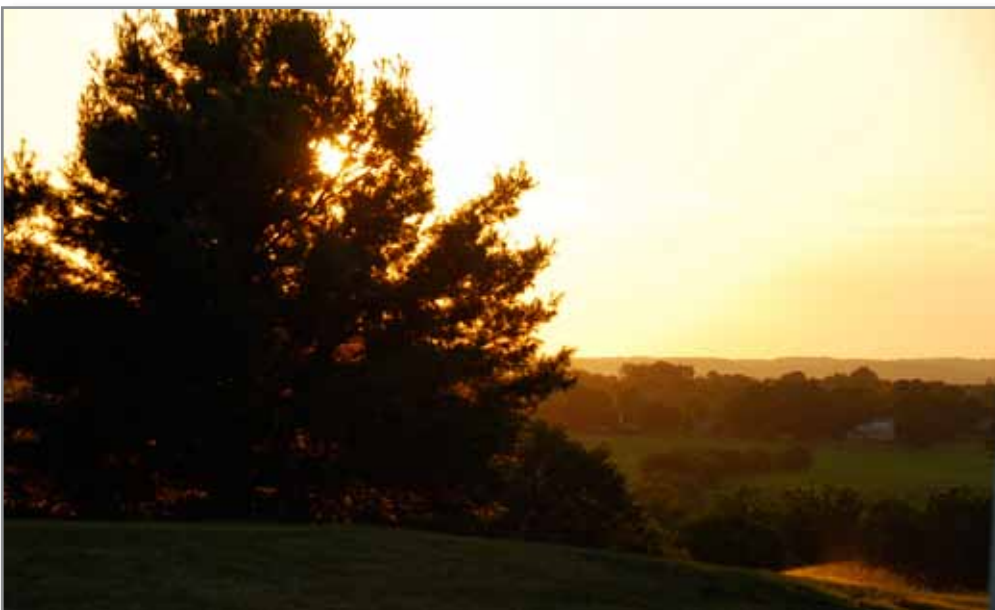
12 **Sourland Artist Profile: Pat Flanagan, Weaver**

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by *Jared Rosenbaum* | Question: Are there any species that might be indicative of a healthy Sourland forest?

Sunset at the 2011 Sourland Music Festival





State of the Mountain

Tamara Garaffa, Executive Director

Sourland Teacher Toolkit Will Bring Earth Science Home to Hopewell

The Sourland Planning Council (SPC) is preparing to launch its *Project Sourland Teacher Toolkit* in the Hopewell Valley School District later this school year. The *Toolkit* is being developed as a customized curriculum supplement to assist teachers and students in their local earth science knowledge and aims to create a greater appreciation for the natural beauty that lies just outside their doorstep. In April, we were awarded the 2010 Pennington Day Signature Grant to support this curriculum development.

The Sourland mountain region and its unique geology, hydrology, and soils will be incorporated into the district's lesson planning to illustrate teaching points and give real world examples from the students' own backyards. We anticipate that students will find unique relevancy in the lessons so that their awareness of and appreciation for local natural resources will grow.

The teachers are eager to learn too. While they know their science concepts inside and out, they were not taught about local conditions during in their own college training. In addition to content, the *Toolkit* will give teachers fresh approaches, such as visual aids and hands-on activities, to add an element of fun for the students.

As a certified science teacher and former field ecologist, I am drawing upon my teacher training and field experience to do this work. I have spent time this summer researching Sourland geology with the assistance of two interns fresh from their college studies, Zac Andrews of Hopewell and Brian Becker of Warren. We are on track to launch the pilot for 6th grade middle school students in Hopewell Valley's Timberlane Middle School in 2012.

We hope to produce a first class program that the district and its parents can be proud of

Lesson plan enhancements are being built around NJ State Core Science Curriculum Standards for the 6th grade level. The tools are intended to supplement teaching on required earth science subjects, such as plate tectonics and major rock types, using examples from the Sourlands. One of the aids will be a 3D model of the Sourland ridge and surrounding valleys which breaks into cross-section, revealing the various sub-strata beneath the earth. Other tools include a timeline of the formation of the Sourland Mountain, rock and soil samples and test kits, and an in-class multi-media presentation on the Sourlands. Teachers will receive instruction on how to use these tools so that they can be incor-


porated year after year.

Since the curriculum will focus on local geology, we are fortunate that a local geologist with an expert knowledge of field conditions in the Sourlands has volunteered to work with us to ensure that the teachers will be well prepared.

We appreciate the generous financial support of Pennington Day, Inc., a 501(c)3 nonprofit parent organization of the annual Pennington Day street fair. We also thank the administration and faculty of Timberlane. We hope to produce a first class program that the district and

its parents can be proud of and that is capable of expansion to other grade levels and even to adoption in other school districts throughout Central New Jersey, so that awareness of this amazing natural feature will increase locally in future generations.

The Pennington Day Board of Trustees felt the decision to support SPC and its *Project Sourland Teacher Toolkit* was a wonderful opportunity to give back to the community with a rich program that will benefit middle school children in Hopewell Valley. We agree!

If any SPC members are interested in volunteering to assist the teachers and students on special days next spring, we will provide training. Please contact me at 908-428-4216. 

COMMENT

Current Environmental Issues in Trenton

Andrea Bonette

A Report on New Jersey State Government and the Environment

Air Quality

According to a September report from Environment New Jersey, three regions in New Jersey are ranked in the top 25 nationally (Somerset-Hunterdon scored 20th) for having the most “smog days” in 2010. Several years ago ten neighboring states from Maine to Maryland formed the “Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative” (REGGI) with the purpose of capping carbon dioxide emissions from power plants. A tax would be charged for every ton of CO₂ emitted, with the funds being used to invest in clean energy (such as wind and solar) and in measures to improve energy

Governor Christie pulls out of the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative.

efficiency. The program is functioning well and the REGGI group plans to reconvene in 2012 to evaluate its success and make suggestions for improvement. However, New Jersey will not be there. The Christie administration has withdrawn from “REGGI,” claiming that it has not been, and will not be, sufficiently effective in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The Governor believes that the “market” will do a better job of creating incentives to reduce the use of carbon-based fuels. Time will tell whether he is right.

Energy Master Plan


The 2008 EMP called for 30% of New Jersey’s energy to come from renewable sources by 2020. The 2011 EMP, however, reduces that goal to 22.5%, and instead encourages the expansion of natural gas plants. Although our state legislature has passed a bill to prohibit “fracking” of shale deposits to extract natural gas in our state, Governor Christie has conditionally vetoed it for the present. Currently plans are under way to site gas pipelines carrying New York’s and Pennsylvania’s fracking product into the state. Meanwhile, the President of the region’s Solar Industries Association says “The state’s solar program is in crisis right now.”

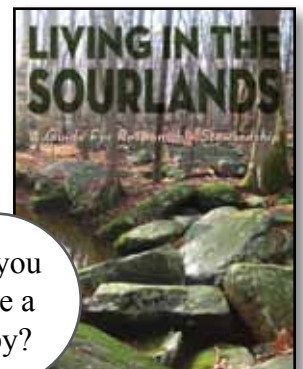
The Waiver Rule

Department of Environmental Protection Commissioner Martin has proposed allowing the DEP to “waive” any of its regulations in cases in which it determines the applicant’s circumstances to be “unduly burdensome,” when the rule conflicts with

New DEP proposal allows waivers of its regulations.

another Department or federal agency, when there is a public emergency, or when the waiver would produce a “net environmental benefit.” It is not clear precisely who could make the decision to grant these waivers

(the rule refers only to “The Department”), and there is no provision for public input into the decision. SPC attended a hearing in Trenton last April and testified along with many other organizations and individuals about serious problems we see in this proposal. “Net environmental benefit” can easily mean that we trash one area while cleaning up another area that has more trash than we’ve generated. This does not make sense to us. “Unduly burdensome,” like beauty, is in the eye of the beholder, and it creates an opportunity for corruption. Finally, a waiver cannot be un-waived once the applicant has acted on it. In September, the Senate Environment Committee voted 3-2 along party lines to oppose the waiver rule. The current status of this rule, according to the DEP website at the time of this writing, is “Adoption Pending.” 



Do you have a copy?

Living in the Sourlands

SPC’s Stewardship Manual

Download a pdf at
www.sourland.org/LITS.pdf
 or email: director@sourland.org

NEWS

NEWS OF THE

The Bunbury Company Provides SPC with a Grant for Sourland Protection

We are pleased to announce that the Sourland Planning Council has received a \$5,000 grant from The Bunbury Company, Inc. of Hopewell for operating support. An anonymous donor generously met our request for a match to this \$5,000 challenge grant. The donation included a caveat that it must be matched and applied towards the implementation phase of the Sourland Mountain Comprehensive Management Plan (CMP), which was completed last year by the planners Banisch Associates of Flemington under a multi-year, \$100,000 NJDCA grant to the Sourland Planning Council. It was also vetted by the Sourland Alliance, an independent organization of volunteer representatives appointed by the five Sourland towns.

The Comprehensive Management Plan may be read on the SPC's website at www.Sourland.org under Advocacy, as well as at <http://sites.google.com/site/sourlandalliance/home>, a oogle site developed by the Sourland Alliance.

The Bunbury grant money and the anonymous donation will allow our executive director to dedicate regular time each week to CMP work. The goal is to provide technical and administrative support to the Sourland Alliance representatives in their efforts to implement the CMP's recommendations. So far, township committees in East Amwell,

Hillsborough, Montgomery, and West Amwell have passed resolutions endorsing the Comprehensive Management Plan.

Some current and future Sourland Alliance goals related to the Comprehensive Management Plan include:

1. To assess the status of current local environmental ordinances that protect natural resources within the Sourlands, including but not limited to stream corridor, woodlands, groundwater, steep slope, and storm water management; to offer recommendations to Sourland towns regarding such resource protection ordinances.
2. To develop criteria for an objective ranking system for towns regarding protection levels provided to Sourland resources by local ordinances already in place and the level of real-world compliance, with the desired trend to 'go greener.'
3. To develop an assessment of open space planning in the Sourlands and to encourage communication between public and private land preservation interests – to connect the dots in a regional sense.

A hearty thank-you to both the Bunbury Company and our anonymous donor for supporting the Sourland Planning Council and the Sourland Management Plan! We hope to exceed their expectations and work hard to

maintain a productive and beneficial relationship. 📍

Annual SPC Holiday Party

The Sourland Planning Council is holding its annual holiday party on December 11 from 2:00 to 6:00 in the Antique Barn at Cashel Farm, owned by Jennifer Bryson and John McGahren. Cashel Farm is at 145 Wertsville Road in Hillsborough. We hope you can come. Please RSVP

**SAVE THE DATE:
DECEMBER 11**

to Andrea Bonette at treasurer@Sourland.org or 609 466-1169. 📍

Sourland Music Festival 2011

Blessed with another beautiful day on the Mountain, this summer's Sourland Music Fest, which took place on July 16th, was a joy to behold. With a bigger and better stage and another stellar line up of musicians, everyone was raving. Getting things off to a rocking start



Blowing bubbles at the Sourland Music Festival



A beautiful day at the Sourland Music Festival

was Ten Foot Tall with their funky grooves and jamming guitars. Next came Sandy Zio, who has one of the best singing voices anywhere. Original acoustic blues was supplied by Wisier Time, who are quietly becoming the critics favorite, with excellent songwriting and classic guitar playing by Jimmy Somma, who was nominated for best guitarist by the Alternate Root Magazine. Things got down and dirty with Nasty Ned and Johnny Charles, two veteran blues masters who know how to get loose and please a crowd with their Chicago style storytelling and swinging riffs. From there we went down south a bit with the Voodudes who are nearly legendary for their Louisiana flavored Zydeco Funk. With the sun setting and the crowd at capacity the feeling was it can't get any better than this. Well it can and it did when the Mike Montrey Band took the stage. Uptempo, uplifting songs with dual horns and chugging drums took us into the night. Jim Popik from the Ten Foot Tall Band sat in on a few numbers and the smile on Montrey's face said it all.

Every year gets better. The food

was wonderful, the artisans and crafts delightful and there were many fine entries to the silent auction. Thanks to the volunteer efforts of the Sourland Planning Council staff,

the Thompson family for the venue, and all the fans and attendees, we raised over 10 thousand dollars for the SPC. Thanks also to Mike Klein for some outstanding photos and to the B & K Business Group for supplying the Sourland Music Fest website, and to PrintPOD for printing our posters and program. We also greatly appreciate the beautiful art work for the poster donated by Hopewell artist Thom Montaneri. Stay tuned to www.Sourlandmusicfest.net for more photos and video from years past. 📷

Update on the Comprehensive Management Plan

The Sourland Alliance (S.A.) is 4 for 5 so far! The Sourland Mountain Comprehensive Management Plan (CMP) was presented this year by the Alliance to all five towns making up the bulk of the Sourlands. Township officials have voted to endorse by resolution in West Amwell Twp. (S.A. reps: Cathy Urbanski & Joel Coyne), Montgomery Twp. (S.A. reps: Sarah Roberts & Laurin Long), Hillsborough Twp. (S.A. reps:

Charlie Clark and Susan Guilford), and East Amwell Twp. (S.A. reps: Tracy Carluccio and Don Kiely). We thank these towns' elected officials for their wise foresight in taking steps to protect our local gem for future generations.

Hopewell Township is the only town still deliberating. We felt encouraged when its Environmental Commission heard and expressed support for the Plan. S.A. reps Tom Kilbourne and Jim Andrews have presented on the plan to the Planning Board, where, after much consideration, the board has recommended to the Township Committee that the CMP be approved. .

We want to be 5 for 5 and get all the Sourland towns together on the same good page. Wind, water, and wildlife don't know for nothin' about town boundary lines.

If you would consider writing to Hopewell officials or attending meetings to express your support for the management plan, please let us know. 📷

New Logo, New Look

Have you noticed the new logo in the banner at the top of our cover page? Artist Fransje Keur of JFK Design & Company of Princeton, New Jersey, created this wonderful image for us. Thank you, Fransje! And along with the new logo for the Sourland Planning Council comes a new look for the *Sourlands Journal*. We hope you like it. 📷

THE SOURLAND
INTERVIEW

Ursula Colbourne Brecknell
Tom Seessel

Documenting Local History for Almost Half A Century

When Ursula Brecknell left New York City with her husband and young twin daughters in 1964, they moved into one of Montgomery Township’s earliest postwar subdivisions. The township’s population was about 4,000, less than one-fifth its present size.

The development, Bunker Hill Estates, near the Millstone River in the northeast section of the township, happened to be located within a 5-mile radius of several historically significant places, some of whose origins can be traced to Colonial times. And the Brecknells’ relocation happened to coincide with a renewed appreciation of the nation’s historic heritage – and the importance of preserving what was left of it.

National and State laws enacted in the mid-1960s, led by First Lady “Lady Bird” Johnson in part to counteract the destructive side effects of federal programs such as the Interstate Highway System and Urban Renewal, provided the first comprehensive policy framework for historic preservation in all 50 states.

Ursula Brecknell was eager to apply her talent and entrepreneurial spirit to this vocation in her new community .

As a child, she had learned about historic preservation from her next-door neighbor’s involvement in

Historic Richmond Town, a 100-acre living history village and museum, and her mother’s membership in the Staten Island Historical Society. The newcomer to Montgomery Township was quick to appreciate the value of that community’s neglected historic treasures, many of which share a Dutch heritage with her hometown, the former New Amsterdam.

Over several years Ursula was principal author of nominations for the National and State Registers of Historic Places, resulting in the inclusion of the River Road Historic District, the Blawenburg Historic District, the Dirck Gulick House, and Bridgepoint, New Jersey, New Jersey’s first listed farm historic district.

A founding member of the Van Harlingen Historical Society in 1965 soon after her arrival, Mrs. Brecknell saw the opportunities provided by the new historic preservation legislation. Over the next several years she was principal author of nominations for the National and State Registers of Historic Places, which were established by the new legislation. Her work resulted in inclusion of the River Road Historic District, the Blawenburg Historic District, the Dirck Gulick House, and Bridgepoint, New Jersey’s first-listed farm historic district.

She was also a charter member of the Montgomery Township League of Women Voters, and volunteered to write a brief local history

chapter of the League’s “Know Your Township” booklet. Immersing herself in the topic, Mrs. Brecknell learned that there was a vast amount of local history that had never been documented.

As a result the chapter grew into the first published history of the township, on the occasion of Montgomery Township’s 1972

bicentennial celebration of its establishment as a separate municipality. Updated in 2006, Mrs. Brecknell’s 80-page work, *Montgomery Township: An Historic Community 1702 ...*, with photographs and reproductions of plates and

documents, is available from the Van Harlingen Historical Society.

Mrs. Brecknell was the first editor of the *Montgomery Citizen*, a bi-weekly 4-page newspaper created to address a “lack of communication between the township and its residents.” Its face value was ten cents but Mrs. Brecknell recalls that it was free to Township residents. The *Citizen* ceased publication after only one year, the casualty of a since-forgotten political controversy.

The lead article in its inaugural issue, November 3, 1967, announced a referendum for a \$3.3 million bond issue to build the Township’s first high school on a 74-acre site on Burnt Hill Road. The referendum was approved and the new school

opened in 1969, obviating the need for Montgomery students to continue attending Princeton High School.

Montgomery High School relocated to its present location in 2005, and its original building is now occupied by the Upper Middle School. As Mrs. Brecknell puts it, her twin daughters attended Montgomery schools “as they were being built.”

In the 1970s, Mrs. Brecknell established a business – Historic House Surveys – which produced documentation of the line of ownership and architectural features of residences. Thanks to this experience, Mrs. Brecknell says “I have probably pored over more land deeds than anyone in Somerset County.”

This work provided material for Mrs. Brecknell’s *Hillsborough: An Architectural History*, published in 1996 by the Hillsborough Township Historic Preservation Commission. The handsome volume, with photographs by Walter Choroszewski, is a 288-page chronicle of some 150 historic residences, churches, bridges, mills and barns built from approximately 1700-1900.

The book is available at the Planning Office in the Hillsborough Township Municipal Building.

Mrs. Brecknell teamed up with Greg Huber, a specialist in old houses and barns in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and New York, to win a grant award from the New Jersey Historical Commission in 1991 for a study of 30 Dutch barns in Somerset County. Their paper was submitted to the Historic Commission but Mr. Huber and Mrs. Brecknell do not believe it

was ever published. Mr. Huber, who owns the Pennsylvania-based Past Perspectives, a historic and cultural resources company, recalls Mrs. Brecknell as a “dedicated researcher who loved history.”

In 2010 she was honored by a resolution of the Montgomery Township Committee for “dedicated, selfless contribution of time and talent” in her work, including membership on numerous Township Commissions involved in environmental and historic conservation. Mrs. Brecknell also served a term on the State Historic Sites Council (a separate agency from the Historical Commission), appointed in 1986 by Governor Thomas Kean.

Former Montgomery Township Mayor Louise Wilson calls Mrs. Brecknell an “invaluable resource for this community” and notes that she is always available to answer phone calls from people seeking information about the area. In an interview for this profile, Mrs. Brecknell was reluctant to take sole credit for her accomplishments and repeatedly mentioned supporters and collabora-

Mrs. Brecknell’s book *Montgomery Township: An Historic Community 1702 ...* was the basis for the defeat of the “Somerset Freeway,” the proposed I-95 connection between I-287 and I-295 through Hillsborough, Montgomery and Hopewell Townships.

tors in her endeavors. She also made clear that a substantial portion of her work has been financially compensated.

The 2010 Montgomery Township resolution mentions Mrs. Brecknell’s having provided historically signifi-

cant names for the principal roads in new subdivisions, usually names of the original land owners. Some of these are Dorland Farm Court, off Sunset Road between Rte. 601 and Burnt Hill Road; Covenhoven Road in Fieldstone Glen; John Blaw Drive in Cherry Valley; and Allshouse Way, off Dutchtown-Harlingen Road east of Rte. 601.

But perhaps the road for which Ursula Brecknell may be most gratefully remembered is one that was never built – an approximately 30-mile Interstate highway proposed in the 1960s to connect I-287, near Piscataway in Middlesex County, with I-295, in Ewing Township in Mercer County. The I-95 super-highway, sometimes referred to as the “Somerset Freeway,” would have slashed through Hillsborough, Montgomery and Hopewell Townships and, in the words of the Van Harlingen Historical Society, caused “an irreparable scar on our landscape.”

I-95 would have altered the unique character of the Sourlands, causing the kind of large scale destruction the Historic Sites legislation was designed to prevent.

Governor Brendan Byrne cancelled the I-95 proposal in 1979. The Historic Resources volume of the project’s Environmental Impact Statement cites as

a basis for this decision Mrs. Brecknell’s *Montgomery Township: An Historic Community 1702 ...* Among the sites that were threatened by the highway were many that Mrs. Brecknell and her colleagues had labored to celebrate

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POET'S CORNER

Encounter

Carolyn Foote Edelmann

(Cedar Ridge Preserve,
Hunterdon County, New Jersey)

“grove and glade”

“thicket and copse”

“hummocks and vanished hummock sedge”

following the ardent preservationist
we threaded Cedar Ridge
in morning mist
and spitting rain
savoring his redolent phrases

when out of the mist
strolled autumn's hunter
– sharp bow at his waist
– arrows like semaphores
– jacket, cap and leggings
thick with camouflage
aflutter like moths

with each stride, he rippled
breaking up his silhouette
so he could bring home the deer

when 75 hunters
rebuilt the stone wall
– dividing property from property
– '30s field from '70s
our guide had urged,
“Release your inner mason”

sinuous and gleaming
beneath tall boundary trees
their stone wall led us
from meadow to thicket
to glade

black web, hunter-spun
it links as it separates
“mature forest” from “early successional”
weaving all of us forward
– toward owl haunt and refuge of turtle

all hands blessed the monarch
of that remote glen:
the ancient oak silvery
in October spurts of light
coiled roots sheltering
mushrooms soft as feathers

our hunter faded to shadow
exultant in good works
– vernal pools dug
– the building of bridges
– invasives untangled
– rough rocks settled
into that masterful fence

above all, the thinning of herds
that devour both cedar and ridge
in our New Jersey

that bow at his waist
moved at its own pace

as though Robin himself
strode with us that day
through Hunterdon's greenwood

Poet's
Corner



Carolyn Foote
Edelmann

Carolyn Foote Edelmann, poet and amateur naturalist, serves as Community Relations Associate at D&R Greenway Land Trust, focused also on arts and education. Carolyn maintains two nature blogs, NJ WILD for the *Princeton Packet* and The Nature of Princeton for *The Princeton Patch*. Carolyn is increasingly magnetized by the mystery and majesty of the Sourland Mountain region.

REGULAR FEATURE

On the Mountain

Pat Sziber

Profiles of the Creatures & Features We Protect

~ Nature's Cornucopia for Birds ~

The movement of birds across the landscape, their migratory patterns, including timing and migration route, and their choice of residence through the seasons, are intricately linked to the availability of foods in the wild. While the northward migration of many species is synchronized with the emergence of certain insects, especially caterpillars, the southward migration is keyed to fruits.

In fact, many birds that frequent our feeders in winter may ignore them at first because of the abundance of naturally-occurring fruits in the fall. At the height of fall migration, you can find many birds foraging in shrubs, vines and smaller trees. The inky-black berries of pokeweed ripen in September and are readily taken by robins, other thrushes, bluebirds, catbirds and many other species. The shiny red fruits of flowering dogwood are an early fall treat. Virginia creeper,

a sprawling native vine whose 5-lobed leaves turn brilliant scarlet, is a favorite of woodpeckers, vireos, thrushes and waxwings. The several species of grape native to our area are devoured by nearly every species of wild bird, as are the firm fruits of spicebush and our native viburnums.

Also in the fall, the plump fruits of our small native crabapple and the white fruits of panicked dogwood attract some of the later migrants as well as early-arriving winter residents such as the white-throated sparrow, dark-eyed junco and American tree sparrow. The seeds of many herbaceous plants, such as coneflower, goldenrods, and asters, and native grasses, such as Indian grass and big bluestem, provide nourishment even when there is snow on the ground.

In winter, many bird species find both food and shelter in eastern red



Cedar waxwing eating wild fruit

cedar trees, whose dense evergreen branches provide protection from the wind and whose deep grayish-blue berries attract robins, bluebirds, kinglets, white-throated sparrows and others. Also in winter, after freezing temperatures have altered their chemistry, the berries of American holly and even poison ivy are an important source of sustenance. Robins devour every fruit from a winterberry shrub in late winter. Please note that holly and poison ivy berries are never safe for human consumption. Whether in your own backyard or out on the trail, take the time to see who is feasting on nature's bounty. And have your camera handy. That picture of a chickadee about to pluck a fruit from a frost grape vine will be one of your most cherished wildlife photos. 📷

Ursula Colbourne Brecknell

(continued)

continued from p. 9 and protect: Bedens Brook Road Bridge, Opossum Road Bridge, Harlingen Church and Cemetery, Garretson/Skillman Farm on Rte. 601, the D&R Canal, and the Bridgepoint Historic Farm District.

Mrs. Brecknell has lost her vision because of macular degeneration, but continues to pursue her life's work with the aid of a closed-circuit television magnifier. One of her current projects is completion of the history of the 50-odd street names she has

given to the Township's new developments – one of her many lasting contributions to future generations' understanding and appreciation of the Sourlands. 📷

ARTIST PROFILE

Patricia Flanagan, Weaver

Caroline Katmann

The Gift of Fiber

How does one transition from Director of Quality Control in a chemistry laboratory to spinner, weaver, knitter and alpaca breeder? This transition is the story of Swallow Hill Farm, an alpaca farm located in the “lowlands” of Sourland Mountain. Swallow Hill sits picturesquely atop a rise at 583 Montgomery Road in Hillsborough just north of the intersection of Wertsville and Montgomery Roads. The strangely calming sight of several alpacas, in hues of beige, brown, black and white, grazing on the steep slope of Swallow Hill, with graceful swallows swooping overhead, is truly one of the greatest treasures this part of the mountain region has to offer.

The Flanagans grew up in Philadelphia but came to this area looking for “tranquility.” “When we came upon this hidden treasure, I said to John, ‘Are we in New Jersey?’” Pat explained that she is committed to the conservation of the Sourland Mountain region. She is an avid birder, and as a member of the Sourland Planning Council, spends many hours doing volunteer work as a bookkeeper and assistant to the treasurer. This past summer, Pat was one of the most popular vendors at the Sourland Music Festival.

According to Pat, “Maybe going from a chemist to a weaver of textiles wasn’t such a giant leap after all because of my chemistry degree

with a focus on textiles.” She fell in love with alpacas while helping a



Pat Flanagan at her loom

neighbor show her sheep at the New Jersey Sheep and Fiber Festival in Ringoes. Pat was already spinning and weaving sheep wool but ironically suffered from wool allergies. As she wandered around to see the various vendors at the show with an eye to purchase yarn, she came upon “these creatures” in the back barns. As she waited for her turn to touch the animals, she listened to Bill and Elizabeth Johnson (of Abenaki Acres in New Jersey) sing the praises of the creatures. The alpacas had Pat at first touch: “They were the softest thing I had ever felt.” And, when she heard that they all go in a communal manure pile for easy cleaning and that their fiber is hypoallergenic right off the animal*, she was determined to make the case for raising alpacas to her husband John!

For the uninitiated, alpaca (*Vicugna pacos*) is a species of South American camelid. It resembles a small llama in appearance. Alpacas are kept in herds that graze on the level heights of the Andes of southern Peru, northern Bolivia, Ecuador and northern Chile. Apparently, they thrive in New Jersey, as well! Alpacas are social herd animals that live in family groups consisting of a territorial alpha male, females and their young. Adorable, with big brown eyes highlighted by lush eye lashes and topped by a mop of floppy hair called a “top knot,” alpacas are quite endearing. Not exactly “cuddly,” the alpacas at Swallow Hill do warm up to visitors and allow themselves to be petted. Young



An alpaca pronking

alpacas bound joyously around the barn and fields, charming visitors with their antics and pronking (jumping straight up on all four legs).

REGULAR FEATURE

Sourland Q&A
Jared Rosenbaum

QUESTION: Are there any species that might be indicative of a healthy Sourland forest?

ANSWER: I'd like to think there is an easy answer to this – one that is pretty clear even if you can't identify a single plant, turtle, or bird.

Look around any wild habitat, anytime from April to October. If you see flowers, lots of them, the habitat is likely to be diverse and undegraded. The flowers should be high and low and come in many shapes and sizes, and something should be in bloom continuously throughout the growing season.

Plants garner the sun's energy and make it available as sugar and starches

continued on p. 14



Roadside woodland sunflower
(*Helianthus divaricatus*)

Jared Rosenbaum

Pat handles her alpacas comfortably, knowing each animal's habits and personality and somehow even keeping all of their names straight!

Pat and John moved to Swallow Hill Farm in January of 1997. They gradually phased out their sheep and prepared their property for alpacas.



Alpacas kissing

In November of 2005, they started with six fiber alpacas (males). They now have thirteen males and eight females. Swallow Hill Farm has won many awards for the alpacas, as well as for their fiber. They now sell alpacas as well as alpaca products (scarves, shawls, headbands and gloves), alpaca yarn, and other handcrafted items.

Now that she is an established breeder and weaver, Pat's next challenge to herself is to teach weaving to others. "Teaching would be a wonderful way to share the gift of fiber that these amazing creatures give to us; the thrill of watching a pattern emerge from the loom is soothing and satisfying work." When asked to describe the skills involved in weaving, Pat enthusiastically explains that coordination, some mathematics, and the ability to focus for long periods of time are the essentials.

The gifts Pat Flanagan has received from her alpacas are many. "They help me return to nature, to create from nature and to appreciate what I have."

Look for Swallow Hill Farms at the following craft shows this year: November 5: Flemington United Methodist Church; November 12: Montgomery High School for "Montgomery Made by Hand;" November 19-20: YWCA Crafters Market Place in Princeton; December 10: Trinity Episcopal Church Christmas Craft Fair in Rocky Hill.



Closeup of Pat working

For information about alpacas, products, lessons, and farm tours, contact John and Patricia Flanagan at Swallow Hill Farms: 908-369-7091 or pasflanagan@comcast.net. 📧

* Source: *Show & Tell, Your alpaca Showcase*, "alpacas-The Perfect Fit. But Wait..." Spring 2008, Page 24.



Save the Sourlands

Central New Jersey's
Last Great Wilderness

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(They're free)



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Sourland Q&A

continued from p. 13 to the rest of life on the planet, from soil microorganisms to birds on the wing. Flowers are a sign of healthy plants, plants that have plenty of energy reserves and are having a go at sexual reproduction. Flowers are the direct precursor to fruit, seeds, and more plants – and thus food for the rest of the food chain.


In our local woods, the season often begins with spring beauty, trout lilies, and bloodroot, followed by flowering shrubs and trees like dogwoods, viburnums, and azaleas. Midsummer is a shady time in the woods, but nevertheless plants from cardinal flower to black cohosh bloom on tall spikes, attracting pollinators from afar. The autumn forest blooms in the whites and pale blues of wood asters, and the rich yellow of wreath goldenrod.

It is true that various non-native weeds may have colonized the woods, and might be flowering as well. But I'm willing to bet that any woods that blooms at all heights and times in the season has a level of diversity that no exotic plant monocultures can mimic.

So, what does it mean if you look around and...don't see any flowers? In an otherwise undisturbed wild area, the most likely cause is deer overpopulation. Often, our plant communities are too compromised by deer overbrowse to muster the energy to reproduce. Or, if they try, deer come along at just the right moment to nip a developing bloom.

Another reason that flowers might be lacking is constant human disturbance. Coming through a patch of wildflowers with a mower in the middle of the growing season is a

sure way to disrupt the life cycles of our native perennials and encourage annual weeds instead. Just look at our roadsides in autumn: mowed once or twice in the middle of the season, they are usually a big dull swath of Japanese stiltgrass by September. But, around utility poles, mailboxes, and big boulders, where the mower can't go, I often see white wood aster, blue heart-leaved aster, even our wild perennial sunflowers.

If you are fortunate enough to live amidst floral abundance, learning plant species can be easy. *Newcomb's Wildflower Guide* is a great beginner's field guide with an easy method for "ID-ing" almost any plant in the region, so long as it is in bloom. 

Send your questions to
director@Sourland.org.