The Sourland Conservancy (SC) has teamed up with Raritan Valley Community College (RVCC) to study water quality and forest restoration methods in the region.

Dr. Jay Kelly, Associate Professor of Biology and Environmental Science at RVCC, led a group of student interns to measure the survival and growth of hundreds of trees and shrubs planted at three forest restoration sites in order to determine the effectiveness of different species, methods and settings for forest restoration.

Their study locations were the Woosamonsa Ridge Preserve and Rainbow Hill Preserve and included one post-agricultural forest site and two intact, old forest sites. At each site they measured the height of trees (by species) planted in 2021 and compared it to natural regeneration occurring in the same area. For those that naturally regenerated, they protected half with the same kinds of materials used to protect the planted trees from deer browse (tubes, cages or exclosures) and left half unprotected to measure ambient levels of browse.

This year, they plan to recollect the same data in order to compare the growth and survival of trees in each category, including: 1. planted trees/shrubs vs. natural regeneration, 2. protected vs. unprotected, 3. methods of protection—tubes, cages, exclosures, and 4. soils/site history (post-agriculture vs. old, intact forests). They plan to add a second post-agricultural site, and plan to install larger cages and small exclosures around natural regeneration and planted oaks and spicebush for comparison.

“We are excited to see the results of this research,” said Rob Aluck, SC’s Stewardship Director. “This data will inform our future planting and deer protection methods, making our work more effective.”

Continued on page 3
The Conservancy has been out on the front lines in furtherance of our mission to protect the important history and ecology of the Sourland Region. Our new planting program is well underway and we are working hard to meet this year’s goal of planting 10,000 new trees to combat the death of ash trees from the emerald ash borer. We held a very successful Sourland Mountain Festival in July, in which over 1200 people spent an afternoon and evening enjoying fabulous music in the fresh air and wonder of the Sourlands. And we continue full-bore with our critical education and advocacy programs. But we’ve been busy internally too—adding dedicated and skilled people to our board and staff. New board members include: Josie Faass of Pennington; Paul Gehris of Langhorne; Steven Hall of Titusville; Jessica Paolini of Lawrenceville; and Alan Wills of Princeton. New staff members include: Rob Aluck (Stewardship Director); Dave Cucchiara (Director of Membership & Development); Sofia Fuentes (Marketing and Communications Coordinator); and Kristen Panos (Administrative Assistant).

It’s wonderful to have such talent working together to preserve this wonderful place that we love!
Imagine what it would be like if flowers and grasses towered over you. Imagine taking refuge under a frond of Christmas fern or under a May apple—even under a cutleaf toothwort. Our height makes these things seem like they are just above the forest floor, but to a chipmunk, they are huge because chipmunks must face the world from a few inches above the ground. Chipmunks are not the smallest mammal in the world, the bumblebee bat of Malaysia and Thailand holds that distinction; this bat is only about one inch long and weighs less than a tenth of an ounce. Eastern chipmunks, at an average length of four to seven inches and an average weight of one to five ounces, are giants by comparison to those tiny bats, but there are no bumblebee bats for them to compare themselves to. Instead, they have to deal with a world of things that are much larger than they are.

If you can imagine what life is like for such a small creature, extend your imagination a bit further, and think about not only being tiny but also being without any means of defending yourself, and having potential killers in the air above you and everywhere on the ground around you. Chipmunks are fast runners, they chirp a warning to each other when they see that a predator is near, and they never go far from the safety of their burrows. But, they have no fangs, talons, or noxious chemicals on their bodies like toads or chemicals that they can squirt like a skunk. Consequently, they are the prey of hawks, owls, coyotes, foxes, snakes, and—especially—that bane to avian life, domestic cats. Their average lifespan is about three years, although if unharmed they can live to be eight or nine years old.

It is easy to imagine that life would be pretty tense if you lived under these circumstances, and chipmunks display what looks like tension. Chipmunks dash from one place to another, stop and look to the right and left, then dash to another spot where they repeat their left to right look—and, although I have never actually noted it, they may be looking up as well. Chipmunks dash from one place to another, stop and look to the right and left, then dash to another spot where they repeat their left to right look—and, although I have never actually noted it, they may be looking up as well. Chipmunks dash from one place to another, stop and look to the right and left, then dash to another spot where they repeat their left to right look—and, although I have never actually noted it, they may be looking up as well. Chipmunks dash from one place to another, stop and look to the right and left, then dash to another spot where they repeat their left to right look—and, although I have never actually noted it, they may be looking up as well.

If you would like to purchase a copy of Jim’s book, please visit tinyurl.com/SCEstore.

What looks like messy nests in trees while chipmunks live in burrows in the ground. Chipmunks are capable of climbing trees, and they do so occasionally to collect nuts or fruits that have not fallen, but they live in burrows whose entrances are in hidden places—under some brush or tucked into the side of a fallen log. They build two kinds of burrows; one is shallow, which they use for quick escapes from predators and to sleep in during warm months. They also build elaborate, larger burrows where they spend the winter. They do not exactly hibernate in winter because they wake up every two or three days to eat some stored food and eliminate waste but they seldom roam outside of their burrows in winter. These larger burrows have several specialized chambers; one to store food, one for waste, another is a nursery; a larger chamber, often padded with leaves and grasses, is where they spend the winter. They also often have tunnels leading downward from each chamber as a way of draining them if water gets in.

As far as I have been able to learn, the chief impact that chipmunks have on their habitat is to be food for other animals. I have asked you to imagine what it would be like to be tiny in a world of bigger things, and to imagine being defenseless in the face of many kinds of peril. Now imagine if the purpose of your life is to be eaten—your entire body—by other beings. There is no evidence that chipmunks have looked into this existential void so I prefer to think of them from an aesthetic point of view. They are so attractive that it is always a treat to see them. Further, the dash of life that they give to the forest makes me glad that they prevail under difficult circumstances.
The good news is that plants native to the ecoregion in which they are planted (Piedmont for the Sourlands) are already optimally equipped to deal with winter in that ecoregion. This is especially true if care is taken to plant a new perennial addition in an area where it might grow naturally in the wild. Plants that are native to sunny shallow marshes, wet meadows and bogs can tolerate cold wet soil and even the standing water that can persist late into spring in the entrained wetlands of the Sourlands—examples include Buttonbush, Winterberry, White Turkheads. Ferns that have a strong preference for shade conditions naturally grow in woodlands and can push up through a heavy overcoat of fallen tree leaves in spring (note that their own dead fronds should be left alone as well through the winter).

Native plants are not only beautiful additions to the landscape but also provide “ecosystem services” to our beleaguered native insects. If you have planted your garden with wildlife in mind, then what you do (and especially what you don’t do) in the fall and winter can become critically important to the survival of those creatures that choose to spend the winter in your garden. While some butterflies are migratory (Monarchs are the prime example), many of our native butterflies and moths spend the winter in a “suspended animation” state called diapause at various life cycle stages depending the species. Mourning cloak butterflies overwinter as adults under a blanket of fallen leaves and winter can become critically important to the survival of those creatures that choose to spend the winter in your garden. While some butterflies are migratory (Monarchs are the prime example), many of our native butterflies and moths spend the winter in a “suspended animation” state called diapause at various life cycle stages depending the species. Mourning cloak butterflies overwinter as adults under a blanket of fallen leaves and is one of the first butterflies to emerge in the spring. The butterflies overwinter as adults under a blanket of fallen leaves and is one of the first butterflies to emerge in the spring. The Mourning cloak butterfly on leaf debris. Photo by Juanita Hummel.

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beloved Woolly Bear caterpillars (larvae of the Isabella Tiger Moth) overwinter as caterpillars under fallen tree limbs, logs, or leaves. Some butterflies and moths pupate and spend the winter in a chrysalis, which could be dangling from the host plant or on a nearby shrub, or from a plant stalk or tree twig. Chrysalises of some species are camouflaged to closely resemble dead leaves, concealing the insect or larva within from would-be predators. Other beneficial insects spend the winter as eggs or larvae inside hollow plant stalks that remain upright during the winter (e.g., Swamp Milkweed, Tall Joe Pye, Cattails). Host-plant-specific insects such as the Goldenrod Gall Fly, the larvae of which are eaten by birds in winter, need those stalks. Leave as many leaves and stalks for insects as you can, along with seed stalks for winter sparrows. Try to find a spot in the yard for a leaf and plant debris pile if you can’t leave them where they have fallen. Find a lot more valuable information about how and why to “Leave the Leaves” and when is the best time to clean up in the spring from the Xerces Society at the following URL—then look forward to more bees, birds, butterflies and blooms next spring!

tinyurl.com/GardenLeaves

We currently are working with The Watershed Institute on an ongoing planting project. They have cleared about 2 acres of invasive species, while our interns have made groundbreak with a handful of plantings. The goal is to prepare the site for a large-scale volunteer planting event. The site is one of our largest current projects involving a multitude of not only species, but designs of groves and densities. Work with private landowners has begun with our first property with a planned planting of 1,000 trees. These private sites are supported by US Forest Service (USFS) and will not only help us as an organization cover more ground with native species, but also help show private landowners another way to be involved and put their own property on the map of restoration.

We have also recently held a CPR/First Aid course for our staff and interns to ensure we are taking all necessary precautions for keeping ourselves and others safe while working out in the field. A number of mishaps or injuries can take place when in remote locations and, luckily, the folks at CPR were happy to give us the skills to help minimize any event that could take place in the field.
The Sourland Conservancy relies on volunteers to achieve its mission: to protect, promote and preserve the unique character of the Sourland Mountain region. They need your help to Save the Sourlands! Volunteers meet new friends, share their knowledge, learn new skills and accomplish extraordinary feats! If you or your group have even just a few hours to offer, visit www.tiny.cc/SCVolunteer. Thank you!

AMPHIBIAN CROSSING & TRAINING

On rainy evenings from late February through March, teams of local volunteers will be serving as “Crossing Guards”—slowing traffic, moving amphibians across the road, and collecting data about the migration.

Interested in joining us? Sign up for this online workshop to learn more. tinyurl.com/SCAmphibians

NEW NURSERY YIELDS RESULTS

Laurie Cleveland, Executive Director

The Sourland Conservancy nursery yields results. The Conservancy staff and volunteers have set up a native plant nursery at the True Farmstead on Hallow Road in Skillman—in the heart of the Sourlands. This close proximity to multiple planting sites is ideal for ongoing forest restoration efforts—and maintenance of past planting sites.

“Simply planting trees is not enough. Maintenance is critical to their success.” said Joe Kazimierczyz, Sourland Conservancy Trustee and Stewardship committee Chair. “Planting sites that are not properly maintained are overrun with invasive shrubs and vines. In those conditions, tree seedlings often don’t survive.”

Conservancy “Stew Crew” volunteers visit former planting sites regularly to remove invasive plants, monitor plant health, and assess deer protection. Once trees reach maturity, Stew Crew volunteers remove trees tubes for reuse in new planting sites.

The location of the property’s plant nursery in the heart of the Sourlands not only makes our forest restoration work much more efficient and cost-effective,” said Laurie Cleveland, the Conservancy’s Executive Director. “It also provides a welcoming space for visitors to reconnect with nature. We’re looking forward to transitioning the traditional landscaping using native plants - and hosting educational events to encourage visitors, residents and businesses to transition lawns to sustain native wildlife and migratory birds.”

The Rock Brook, a pristine Sourland Mountain stream, bisects the Farmstead property. The Conservancy will host its annual volunteer stream monitor training sessions there in conjunction with the Watershed Institute and AmeriCorps Watershed Ambassadors. The True Farmstead is a former working farm originally owned by a Black Union Army veteran. In 2021, the Sourland Conservancy partnered with the Stoutsburg Sourland African American Museum (SSAAM) to purchase and preserve the historic property.

JOIN THE STEWARDSHIP CREW!
Get outside and do important stewardship work in the Sourlands! Our stew crew goes out in the morning on the first and third Friday of each month to remove invasive plants, repair fencing, and maintain planting areas. Email stewards@sourland.org to sign up. Please wear sturdy shoes, thick gloves, eye protection, and clothes you don’t mind playing in the briars in.

COMMITTEES NEED YOU!
Would you like to share your expertise, learn new skills, and meet terrific people? Join a committee! We need more hands working on development, finance, governance, marketing, engagement, and advocacy. Please email info@sourland.org for more information.

LAMBERTVILLE: Where the Sourlands Begin
Interview of Jim Mastrich
Andrea Bonette, Emeritus Trustee

Going back in history for hundreds of years historians have found a crucial relationship between the Sourland Mountain itself and its surrounding communities. The Lenape people hunted for game in the Sourlands but built their settlements on the flanks of the mountain. Early European settlers did the same. The heavily wooded mountain with its clay soils, huge boulders, and underlying bedrock was a good venue for hunting and a superb source of wood for construction and firewood. But it offered many almost insurmountable obstacles to traveling, housing, or farming. When roads were built they went around, not across, the mountain. And as towns developed, connected by these roads, they too hugged its periphery while developing a mutually beneficial relationship with it.

Jim Mastrich, a longtime resident of Lambertville, a practicing psychologist and a history aficionado, moved from Connecticut to a freshly built New Jersey suburb while he was in high school. He never lived in the burbs with its dense population and its “houses bereft of character and charm” squeezed together, symbolized for him the cheaply constructed, narrow window sills. Attending Trenton State College he discovered the Sourlands while visiting one of his professors at a wonderful old house in the woods around Stockton. While in graduate school he lived in a rented house on Featherbed Lane. During these years he learned and became intrigued by the history of the area which eventually led to his co-writing a book, Lambertville and New Hope as part of the “Images of America” series.

Upon finishing grad school Jim moved to Lambertville City (in a house with good windowsills) where he began to explore and appreciate both the physical space and the rich history. Just south of Lambertville, for example, is Washington's Rock, from where the General was able to check on the safety of his hidden boats intended to be used in a surprise attack on the British Army to the west of Lambertville, for example, is Washington’s Rock, from where the General was able to check on the safety of his hidden boats intended to be used in a surprise attack on the British

Amber Bonette, Emeritus Trustee
Native Plants
Thursday, September 22

Tom and Fran share some of their favorite lessons learned over their time on The Native Plants Healthy Planet Podcast to help make this native plant journey enjoyable. Nature is resilient and always finds a way—so will you.

D&R Greenway’s St. Michael’s Farm Preserve: Beyond the Beet Path
Thursday, September 29

Join us to learn more about livestock grazing, community gardens, state listed grassland birds, new pollinator meadows, and more! There’s always something interesting happening at St. Michael’s Farm Preserve. VIRTUAL ONLY.

All Star Pollinators—Native Bees!
Thursday, October 6

“Talk will be held at the Hopewell Presbyterian Church.

Cemetery Journeys on the Sourland Mountain
Thursday, October 13

Join Cheryl Jackson, of the Hopewell Valley Historical Society, to discover some of the things she has learned along her cemetery journeys. Learn about gravestone art and symbolism, along with their meaning, and some impressive examples of local colonial stone carvers and local stone cutting companies.

The African American’s Deep Connection to the Land—SSAM Update
Thursday, October 20

Join us to learn more about our exciting partnership project, at the True Farmstead on Hollow Road from the Stoutsburg Sourland African American Museum executive director, Donetta Johnson.

Now Boarding: Life in 1900s Hopewell with the Arrival of the Railroad
Thursday, October 27

Join Doug Dixon of the Hopewell Valley History Project to explore how the arrival of train service in the 1870s along the foothills of the Sourlands drove the growth of the small village of Columbia into the town of Hopewell.

Wet Dogs, Cold Nights: A History of Shad Fishing on the Delaware
Thursday, November 3

Join Steve Meserve of Lewis Fishery to take a look at a 130 year old shad fishery on the Delaware River. What are some of the things that have changed, what has remained the same, and how things might look in the future.

Bald Eagle
Thursday, November 10

Biologist Larissa Smith of the Conservancy and Endangered Wildlife Foundation of NJ presents a program on the NJ Bald Eagle Project. Larissa will discuss the program’s history from the 1980’s when there was only one eagle nest left in New Jersey to today’s population of 250 active pairs. VIRTUAL ONLY.

Welcome to our new fall interns, (from left to right) Sharon Landstrom, Marco Carattini, Sari Pehrke, Shelby Pittman, and Robert Ruth, after a successful day of tree planting at The Watershed Institute. Rain or shine, this enthusiastic group heads out to different Sourland sites every day to plant native trees and shrubs, put up deer excllosures, remove invasive species, and more. At volunteer planting events, they teach volunteers how to place tree tubes, which plants are invasive, and even what they should plant on their own backyard! Thank you for your hard work!

The Sourland Planning Council will hold its first Sourland Mountain Bike & Hike event on Saturday, September 18, 2021. The event is the first of its kind to be organized by the Sourland Planning Council (SPC), a non-profit organization that seeks to educate the public about the Sourland Mountain Preserve, a 20,000 acre protected area located in Hunterdon and Warren counties, New Jersey.

The event is open to all ages and abilities, and will feature guided hikes and mountain bike rides throughout the Sourland Mountain Preserve. The event will begin at 9:00 am at the Sourland Mountain Preserve’s main entrance, located at 300 Millstone Road, Hillsborough Township, New Jersey. Registration is required, and can be completed online at www.sourland.org. Participants are encouraged to wear comfortable clothing and shoes, and to bring water and snacks.

The event will include guided hikes and mountain bike rides of varying difficulty levels, with routes for both beginners and experienced riders. The mountain bike rides will be led by instructors from the Sourland Mountain Bike Club, and will include guided tours of the Preserve’s scenic trails. The guided hikes will be led by volunteers from the Sourland Planning Council, and will provide an opportunity to learn more about the history and ecology of the Preserve.

The Sourland Planning Council is a non-profit organization dedicated to the protection and preservation of the Sourland Mountain Preserve. The Preserve is home to a diverse array of flora and fauna, including rare and endangered species, and provides a critical habitat for a variety of wildlife. The Council is committed to educating the public about the importance of preserving this unique and precious resource.

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A SPECTACULAR HISTORY
Cliff Wilson, Emeritus Trustee

FOOD PLOT’ VENISON STEW
Recipe by Hank Shaw at Honest-Food.net

Ingredients:
- 3/4 cup black-eyed peas
- 3/4 cup dry berries or bally or cut grain or wheat berries
- Salt
- 3 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 2 to 3 pounds version stew meat
- 1 large onion, sliced thin from root to tip
- 6 cups venison broth, beef broth or water
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme
- 1/4 teaspoon celery seed
- 1 pound turnips or salsagage, peeled & cut into chunks
- 4 cups chopped dandelion greens, chive leaves, kale or chard
- 1/4 cup roasted pumpkin seed oil, walnut oil or somesuch, for drizzling
- About 5 minutes before you want to serve, stir in the chopped dandelion greens and rye berries. To serve, ladle out some stew— it should be a thick stew, with lots of chopped dandelion greens and rye berries. Spoon this for another hour or so. (The rye berries should be tender by now, so drain them and set aside.)

Instructions:
1. Put the black-eyed peas and rye berries in separate bowls. Bring a quart or so of water to a boil and pour it over the rye and black-eyed peas. Let the pot sit for about 1 hour. You can also soak them in cool water overnight. Bring a small pot of water to a boil and add the rye berries and thyme and simmer until tender, 45 minutes to 1 hour. Meanwhile, get a large Dutch oven or other heavy pot and set it over medium-high heat. Heat the butter. While the butter is melting, take a few pieces of the venison and cut it on the bias with paper towels. Brown the venison in the hot butter, stirring it as it cooks. Do this in batches so you don’t crowd the pot, and pass dry each batch before you put it into the pot. Set aside the browned venison pieces in a bowl. When the venison is all browned, add the onion and cook over medium-high heat, stirring often, until the edges of the onions begin to brown, about 5 to 6 minutes. Return the venison to the pot and add the broth, thyme and colley seed. Bring this to a simmer and coax gently for 1 hour. After an hour, add the turnips or salsagage and the black-eyed peas. Simmer this for another hour or so. (The rye berries should be tender by now, so drain them and set aside.)

About 5 minutes before you want to serve, stir in the chopped dandelion greens and rye berries. To serve, ladle out some stew— it should be a thick stew, with lots of chopped dandelion greens and rye berries. Spoon this for another hour or so. (The rye berries should be tender by now, so drain them and set aside.)

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Are you stuck trying to figure out what to get family and friends for the holidays? Look no further! We have many great options from books to note cards to maps (including our invaluable Trail Atlas)! Visit tinyurl.com/SCEstore or scan the QR code below!