

Hats off to the Sourland Stewardship crew.

We want to give a shout-out and big thank you to the volunteers that come out on the first Friday of each month to help tackle invasive plants, move wood chips, and do many other activities to help maintain SC's restoration sites. Planting is only part one; maintenance is key to the success of each restoration site. Thank you, Stew Crew! If you want to volunteer, please email stewards@sourland.org.



We had our best Sourland Spectacular yet!

It was a joy to get together again, for our 10th annual event. We had more than 500 riders on Sept. 11, and quite a few more rode, hiked and ran in the following week. We raised more than \$30,000 for the Sourland Conservancy's efforts to save the largest forest in Central New Jersey. Thank you to those who participated!

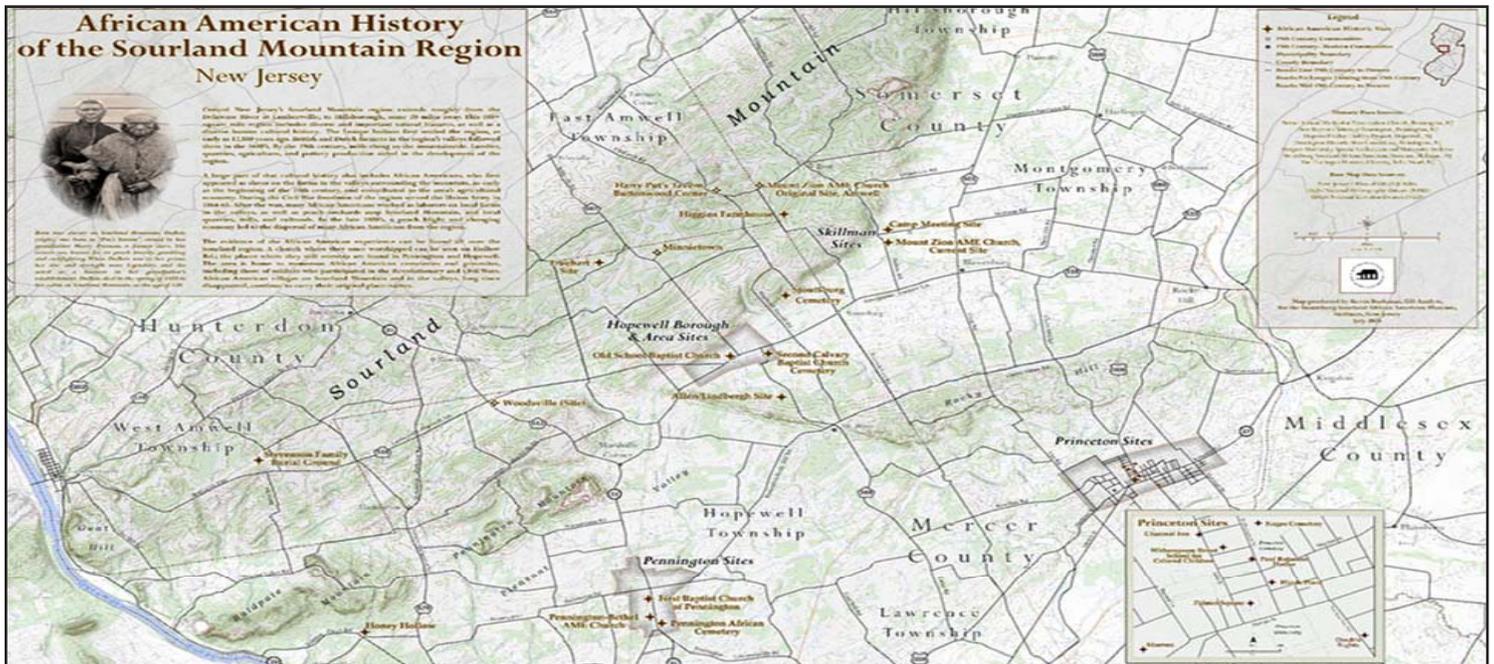


Save the Sourlands Solofest at Hopewell Theater.

Hopewell Theater hosted a screening of the 'Save the Sourlands SoloFest' film and panel discussion moderated by Laurie Cleveland. Experts from the community discussed the ecological and historic importance of the Sourland Mountain – and steps we can all take to save it. Special thanks to our panelists, Donnetta Johnson, Didier Jimenez Castro, Brad Fay, John Cifelli, Jenn Rogers, and Cliff Wilson.



African American History of the Sourland Mountain Region



Kevin Burkman, Stoutsburg Sourland African American Museum Trustee, has produced a new geophysical map depicting the important African American historical/cultural sites of the Sourland region. Check out the map in full detail by visiting SSAAM's website www.ssaamuseum.org.

Sourland Conservancy

Meeting information

Sourland Conservancy's Board of Trustees meetings are held on the first Tuesday of even-numbered months at the train station in Hopewell Borough, at 7 pm. You are warmly invited.

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From the Good News Department

By Marylou Ferrara

The Sourland Conservancy and our partners from across NJ and PA have been fighting against the ill-conceived and unnecessary PennEast pipeline for over seven years.

This month PennEast announced: "PennEast partners...recently determined further development of the Project no longer is supported...accordingly, PennEast has ceased all further development of the Project."

If you supported the Sourland Conservancy in the past seven years, YOU ARE PART OF THIS VICTORY.

Because of our members and supporters, we were able to mobilize people for testimony, petitions, lawsuits, protests, letter-writing campaigns, twitter-storms, and other actions that led to this outcome.

Along the way, we participated in a successful campaign led by Delaware Riverkeeper to push the Delaware River Basin Commission to ban fracking in the Delaware watershed. This has been a goal of local groups for decades, and we have been a constant presence at DRBC hearings every time PennEast and fracking were on the agenda.

So many elected officials in the affected municipalities and counties stood with us in this fight, plus we had the commitment of Congressional Representatives Bonnie Watson-Coleman and Tom Malinowski on the federal level. Cultivating them and educating their staff on the issues was part of the work you supported.

When PennEast went to the Supreme Court, our partners submitted amicus briefs and worked with the NJ Office of the Attorney General to stop them from taking preserved lands for their pipeline, and even when the Supreme Court ruled in their favor, we didn't back down.

Although Federal Energy Regulatory Commission had given them a permit, in New Jersey our coalition's pressure on the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection NJDEP led to failure of PennEast to acquire water quality certification and wetlands permits under Section 401 of the Clean Water Act.

This is a model of what can happen when activists together to fight against corporate environmental profiteering. Thank you for supporting this work. Let's savor this victory and then we'll get back to work protecting the Sourlands and enjoying the beauty and history of this ecoscape jewel.



Seeing the Sourlands: Animal Aphorisms and Metaphors

By Jim Amon

I have long been amused by aphorisms or metaphors that use animal characteristics or behavior, and I have often wondered how accurate they are. The collection that I have presented here only includes examples of animals that can be found in the Sourlands; excluding exotic and domestic animals. So there is nothing here about lazy as a dog, or cowing people with your intimidating appearance, or horse sense, or being as clumsy as a bull in a china shop, or chickening out when confronted by a daunting task. My original goal was to see how often these truisms are true, but I had so much fun researching them that I found it hard to stop. I hope it is fun for you too.



Birds of a feather flock together. Do they really? Well, sometimes, but not always. As you can see, a Canada goose appears to be perfectly comfortable with this flock of mallard ducks. If birds are dealing with predators, they have an advantage by being in a flock; more eyes to see the predator. Some birds never join a flock. There's never a flock of red-tailed hawks, great blue herons, or yellow warblers? Never! And some birds are willing to be part of a mixed species flock. In winter many of the small flocks are comprised of mixed species.

Beeline: When a scout bee returns to the hive after locating a source of nectar it performs a little dance that tells other bees where and how far it is to the nectar. The other bees then fly directly, in a beeline, to that place.

As the crow flies: No one is sure why crows were selected for this expression because crows do not characteristically fly in a straight line. They do not swoop like swallows, but neither is their flight from here to there likely to be a straight line.

Nest egg: A bird's egg is usually secure in a nest, and it is the future of the species. Interestingly, bird species that nest on rocky ledges, like gannets and other sea birds, often do not have very secure nests, but their eggs are elongated with one end bigger than the other so if they get loose and start to roll, they will roll in a circle, not off the edge of the ledge. Eggs from species that nest in cavities or in cup-like nests are nearly round.

Playing possum: Possums might hiss, snarl or even bite if they are in a fight but they are fearful animals and they are likely to faint when they are confronted with danger. This fainting can be interpreted as pretending to be dead.

Snake: Snakes were symbols of evil in ancient Egypt, Canaan, Mesopotamia, and Greece. It seems reasonable that the use of a snake in Genesis as the temptress for Adam and Eve was an out-

growth of this ancient symbolism. It may be a biblical association with evil, or it may be that they have no legs and slither to move that causes us to call a person a snake when he is thought to be the lowest of the low.

Sly as a Fox: There are a lot of qualities that foxes possess that could be used as aphorisms. Foxes are sly; they avoid hunters and human-made traps. Foxes are also resourceful; they have expanded their habitat to include suburban and even urban areas. Foxes are great hunters; the last thing that a farmer wants is a fox in his chicken coop. Foxes are beautiful as illustrated by our use of the word Foxy to describe a beautiful woman.

Multiply-like rabbits: Female rabbits reach sexual maturity at age three months and can have a new litter of up to seven babies every two or three months. They are prey to many other animals, and they are not adept at defending themselves since they do not have claws, or shells, or seriously dangerous teeth, but they do reproduce often. The average lifespan of a female rabbit is fifteen months.

Rabbit punch: Unless you are a sports fan you may not know that a rabbit punch occurs in the boxing ring when one fighter hits his opponent in the back of the head. One male rabbit, if it is fighting with another male, might jump over its opponent and kick it in the back of his head.

Squirrel away: Squirrels are notorious for burying nuts in the fall, preserved for winter when food is generally in short supply. They remember where their caches are located about 75% of the time. Squirrels are also concerned about the safety of their caches; they will dig up a cache and rebury it if they think that they have been observed while burying it the first time. Another interesting fact about squirrel caches is that squirrels tend to put nuts of the same species together, so if the squirrel wants a shag-bark hickory lunch it knows just where to go.

Dropping like flies: This expression is really off the wall. Its origin is a mystery and flies are not known to drop—either to simply drop or as the phrase usually indicates, to drop dead. Houseflies will die if the temperature goes below 32 degrees, but as temperatures drop, they seek crevices or dense vegetation for shelter; places from which they will not drop. Mayflies swarm and die in one day but it seems unlikely that mayflies are the flies that are said to be dropping.

Continued on page 7

Growing Native Plants from Seed – the best time to start is now!

By Randi V. Wilfert Eckel

Fall is upon us and everywhere we look native plants are setting seed. Take a tip from nature – now is the time that we, too, should be beginning to plan for starting wildflowers and other native plants from seed. Propagating plants from seed is fun and economical, but also sometimes challenging. When it comes to planting seeds, I find that a great many folks wait too long to get started. In fact, many native plants require pretreatment that may take weeks to months—which makes fall a great time to get started. Success will depend upon understanding what each species of seed needs in order to grow.

How deep do I plant my seeds?

In general, seeds should be planted no deeper than the thickness of the seed itself. Many native plant seeds are extremely tiny and can easily be buried too deep. ‘Surface sowing’ and then pressing the seeds onto the surface of the soil is the best approach for tiny seeds. It is very important for seeds to have good contact with the soil.

What is Cold stratification?

Many native plant seeds are dormant and require a period of cold stratification before they will grow. This is not complicated—the seeds simply need to experience cold and moist conditions (mimicking winter) for a period of time. Without this step, many native species will stubbornly refuse to grow. In the wild, this actually protects the seeds from starting to grow at the wrong time of year, and different species have different cold stratification needs (anywhere from 4-12 or more weeks). Of course, if your seed requires cold stratification, one of the easiest ways to grow them is to plant directly outdoors and allow Mother Nature to take over (this is why fall is such a good time to start!). Even seeds that require only 4 weeks of cold stratification will do just fine planted outside in the fall—native plants are fully adapted to our seasons. If you are cold stratifying your seed indoors, it is also quite easy—simply plant your seed in a well-labeled pot of moist (not wet) soil, cover with a plastic bag, and put the whole thing in the back of your refrigerator for the prescribed number of weeks, before moving it back to a warm, bright location.

What about moisture and light?

When starting seeds indoors or outdoors, it’s important to remember that the most dangerous time in the life of any plant is just as the seed begins to grow. If tiny seedlings with minuscule roots dry out, they have no defense and will simply die. Indoors, the use of clear domes over seed pots can be very helpful to keep the air and soil moist. Supplemental light is also very important indoors—long days (12-16 hrs. a day)—with the light source only inches away from your seedlings will result in stout, healthy seedlings. Outdoors, keeping an eye on your newly seeded wild-

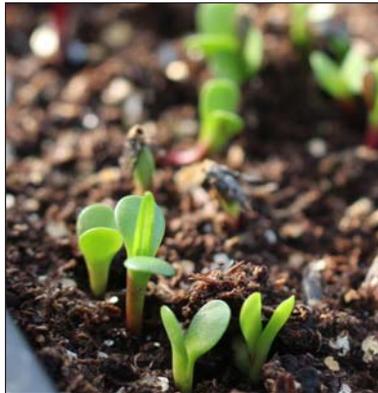


flower beds in spring and making sure that they don’t get overly dry is also very important.

Let’s talk about a couple favorite groups of native plants and how to propagate them from seed:

Milkweeds (*Asclepias sp.*)

If you find Milkweeds, the storied host plant of Monarch butterflies (*Danaus plexippus*), hard to grow from seed, you are not alone. In truth, they are quite easy—but knowing a few tricks will greatly increase your success rate. First, milkweed seeds need about 4 weeks of cold stratification (subjecting seeds to both cold and moist conditions) before most of them will grow. Second, they may look like large seeds, but don’t be fooled by that: Milkweed seeds need light to germinate – if you bury them too deeply, they will never grow. Third, Milkweed plants don’t really like to grow in pots: their large roots need space to spread down and out. They are actually best seeded directly into the garden. Failing that, plan to transplant your Milkweeds into the garden when they are still quite young. Bear in mind that some Milkweeds experience pronounced transplant shock. Butterfly Milkweeds will stop growing for several weeks after transplant. Fourth, you will need patience with some Milkweeds. Although Swamp Milkweed started from seed will grow quite large the first year, others are not so fast, and some – like Butterfly Milkweed – are quite small the first year and, like many perennials, may take several years to reach mature size.



Asters (*Eurybia*, *Symphotrichum*, & *Doellingeria spp.*),

Goldenrods (*Euthamia* & *Solidago spp.*), and Joe Pye Weeds (*Eupatorium* & *Eutrochium spp.*)

Easy to grow from seed, the important thing to remember about these excellent nectar and host plants is that most of them require 8 weeks of cold stratification. The second thing to remember

is that the seeds are very small, so surface sowing is very important.

Coneflower (*Echinacea spp.*) and Blazing Star (*Liatris spp.*)

These outstanding nectar plants also require 8 weeks of cold stratification, but their seed is large enough that covering the seed with about 1/8” of soil works best. Additionally, Blazing Star germinates best when exposed to fluctuating temperatures (mimicking spring) after its cold stratification period is over. An unheated greenhouse or garage (with lights, of course), works very well for this.

This, of course, is just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to growing native plants from seed. Remember to always follow the directions that come with the seeds, and take heart – seeds want to grow! This is, after all, what they are for. Have fun, and happy planting.....



RVCC To Conduct Forest Restoration Research in the Sourlands

By Laurie Cleveland

This fall and spring, the Sourland Conservancy will partner with Raritan Valley Community College (RVCC) to engage student volunteers, service learning students, and paid interns to advance and inform our forest restoration efforts.

Carolyn Klaube, Sourland Conservancy's Stewardship Director, is working with Dr. Jay Kelly, Associate Professor of Biology and Environmental Science, and Dr. Emilie Stander, Associate Professor of Environmental Science, to develop a program for interns and service learning students to measure the success of our planting and fenced sites. The Conservancy plans to use the information gained through data collection to guide future planting and fencing decisions here—and share with residents, municipalities, and other organizations throughout the state and beyond. Since our staff and volunteers will be planting diverse species in various habitats, the data will be very useful in making sure that our planting efforts are as impactful as possible.

We will also work with student interns and service learning students to collect baseline data on stream health and habitat for aquatic organisms in streams close to planting and fenced sites. In the future, the data that was collected can enable us to track stream water quality and habitat quality as ash trees are lost and revegetation efforts proceed.

We plan to continue monitoring the progress of these sites over time. Dr. Kelly's past research indicates that we can expect herba-

ceous plant recovery within deer exclosures in historically forested areas (Kelly 2019, Almendinger et al. 2020). The research conducted in association with this grant will be presented to the public and ecological professionals at a statewide conference, published in peer-reviewed scientific journals, incorporated into class curricula at Raritan Valley Community College and posted as a recorded seminar on Sourland Conservancy's YouTube channel.

The loss of over one million trees could be devastating—not only for Sourland region residents and wildlife, but also for people and wildlife that depend upon the clean water that flows through New Jersey to Pennsylvania and Delaware, migratory species who travel from South America to the Arctic. We believe that residents, municipalities, and nonprofit organizations must pool our resources now to strengthen our ecosystem using the most effective methods available. This project will help us understand the most effective methods of forest restoration and will also provide critical water quality data to monitor changes in water quality over time.

The New Jersey Forest Service estimates that the Sourland Region will lose over one million ash trees over the next few years. We hope to continue this research for the next 5-10 years to understand the effects of ash decline in the Sourlands - not only on the forest but also on water quality.

This project was made possible, in part, by a generous grant from the Gackstatter Foundation.



Sourland's Past and Its Future, An Interview with Donnetta Johnson

By **Andrea Bonette**,
Emeritus Sourland Conservancy Trustee

It seems that some people are born on a specific trajectory in which they seem to know from a very young age exactly what kind of career and what kind of future they plan for themselves. They set out on a defined path, clearly adhere to it, and never deviate. Donnetta Johnson, our new Executive Director of the Stoutsburg Sourland African American Museum (SSAAM), is one of these people, and she has not only done it once, but several times.



Originally from Brooklyn, New York, Donnetta spent her early childhood with her grandmother and auntie in Selma, Alabama and was one mile from the Edmund Pettis Bridge while Martin Luther King and John Lewis faced the Selma police on Bloody Sunday. For high school, Donnetta applied and was accepted into the competitive LPC Program at New York City's Samuel Tilden High School, a magnet program seeking students keenly interested in law, politics and community affairs. There was also a heavy emphasis on American history, but with the typical deficits and gaps regarding the histories and contributions of America's indigenous people, enslaved Africans, and Asian immigrants. Although her first love was history and filling these gaps, Donnetta was not confident these interests offered a clear path to a successful career. Starting college in the 1980's when computer science was emerging as an increasingly dominant segment of the economy, Donnetta pivoted and chose a course of study majoring in math and computer science at Pace University. Her decision to pivot was in no small part due to her determination to be highly strategic as an aspiring young African American woman. As a first generation college student, she was the first in her family to attend college. At the time computer science was a new and exciting field of study, but participation for women, and especially African American women, was rare. Donnetta was determined to make a career in the field and she succeeded, spending thirteen years at AT&T Bell Laboratories in Somerset, New Jersey. Despite facing significant glass ceilings and racial obstacles, Donnetta rose through the ranks to become a senior project manager, eventually leading historic industry-wide telecommunications projects such as the Local Number Portability initiative, and the planning to mitigate the infamous Y2K software bug.

While fully appreciating the benefits of living in suburban Hillsborough with her young family, Donnetta sorely missed the access to the arts that NYC offered. When she realized that there were not enough arts-related activities nearby, she remembered what her mom had always told her: "don't complain, be brave enough to create the world you want to live in." She came to believe that a transition from being a corporate employee to an entrepreneur would allow her to spend more time with her family.

In 1999 Donnetta created "Allegra School of Music and the Arts" in Hillsborough. Over two decades later, Allegra is a family-run fixture in the community, having educated thousands of children and adults in music and theater arts. Over time, she became involved in broader areas of the local community, and at one critical point she attended a local library event where Bev Mills and Elaine Buck were presenting their recently published book, *If These Stones Could Talk*, about African American heritage in central New Jersey. Their presentation excited her. She had no idea that African Americans were enslaved in the Hopewell Valley/Sourland area, and had built important economies and communities practically in her own backyard. While current census reports indicate a very small African American population in this area, Bev and Elaine revealed a family history dating back to before the Revolutionary War. The traditional history texts focus on slavery in the South but there are a lot of gaps when it comes to New Jersey's part in slaveholding, and the subsequent role of African Americans in our area.

So years later after she spearheaded Somerset County's first Juneteenth celebration, when Elaine and Bev suggested that Donnetta might be interested in becoming involved with SSAAM as executive director, Donnetta was excited and inspired by the possibility of helping to develop a new cultural institution. It would be a unique opportunity to tell a more complete story of a people who had been critical in the building of New Jersey, and the nation, and to uncover contributions that had been historically diminished and sometimes entirely forgotten. Donnetta enthusiastically accepted the challenge.

The mission of SSAAM is two-part: to educate the community about the past, and to participate in creating a future that is inclusive and healing. Donnetta has a passion for this project, how engaging our communities in a more complete understanding of history will create better outcomes for everyone, and how building spaces for creativity and learning will strengthen our diverse community. Goals are one thing, but in order to accomplish them, specific actions are necessary: 1) to complete the renovation and transform the Hollow Road Mt. Zion AME church, constructed in 1899, into a museum space; and 2) to launch a successful capital campaign to enable the building of an education and resource center shared with the Sourland Conservancy on the same property. Both organizations will collaborate on promoting engagement in local history, nature, conservation, education, storytelling, and cultural enrichment through the arts. The ultimate goal is to seize this unique moment in America to engage our diverse and caring community. SSAAM will build programs that are thoughtful, honest, inclusive, intelligent, and worthy of the often difficult lessons learned from our shared and unique American heritage.



Meet the Interns!



William Bradford, Lillian Wurtz, Eve Cooke, and Kelsy Geletej

Kelsy Geletej:

"Sometimes in my everyday life it feels like I am not doing everything I can to help the environment; that what I am doing isn't enough. I am really proud that I can say I'm making a difference as a Stewardship intern, where I can visibly see the results of my, and the other interns, hard work. It's very gratifying to see the improvements we're making."

William Bradford:

"I am proud of the sheer number of trees we have all planted so far. We are still working to be as efficient as we possibly can, but we're definitely moving as fast as possible. I have begun to learn how to identify more trees and shrubs from my new experience in the field. It helps me feel more connected to my surroundings whenever I'm out in nature."

Eve Cooke:

"I am proud of being able to carry three rose bushes at one time. I recently learned that all of the native species of North American earthworms died out in a Pleistocene ice age. Therefore, all the worms you see crawling around in the Sourlands are introduced species."

Lillian Wurtz:

"I am really proud of all of the work we've put into getting ahead of the ash death occurring in the Sourlands. I have already learned so much and really enjoy the work I'm doing!"



Tyler Taormina, Robert Lucas and Alex Rivera,
Mercer County Park Commission Land Steward

Robert Lucas:

"I've especially enjoyed planting trees and shrubs alongside the waterways throughout the Sourlands this year. It feels especially relevant and important to be working towards stabilizing stream-banks and restoring native habitat in these vulnerable areas. There is always so much life that gathers around water and the waterways can be such an inspiring place to spend time."

Tyler Taormina:

"When I am on hikes on local trails and come across tree tubes, I know that in a few years this hike will be an entirely new experience with a new forest emerging. I am proud to say, I was a part of it."

Gabby Leach:

"As an environmental science major, I am surrounded by an overwhelming amount of information regarding environmental problems and sustainability issues. While communication is key, I always feel as if we do a lot more talking about these issues rather than making an effort to create change. Interning at Sourland Conservancy goes beyond the discussion and really takes action to help find solutions to these many complex problems. They opened my eyes to the fact that even a small, local organization can make a huge impact and help the community, which gave me a lot of hope for the future."



Seeing the Sourlands: Animal Aphorisms and Metaphors, continued

Continued from page 3.

Drink like a fish: Freshwater fish do not drink; they take in water by absorbing it through their skin. If water comes into a freshwater fish's mouth it is directed to exit through its gills. Saltwater fish drink water through their mouths but not to excess. Like humans, fish must have water for the chemical reactions that occur in their bodies to function. Otherwise, again like humans deprived of water, they would die.

Stool pigeon: The great slaughter of passenger pigeons, so great that gunners exterminated what had once been an uncountable number, was completed when the last passenger pigeon died in the early twentieth century. One way to make it easier for gunners (I cannot dignify them with the term "hunter" because they

didn't hunt, they simply shot.) to kill pigeons was to tie a living pigeon to a stump, or stool. The bound pigeon flapped and squawked, causing other pigeons to come down to see if they could help their distressed comrade. The compassionate birds were then easy targets, lured to their death by the stool pigeon.

Blind as a bat: Bats may not be eagle-eyed, but they are definitely not blind. In fact, their vision during conditions of low light—at dawn and dusk—is better than human vision, except they cannot distinguish colors as well as we can. When it is quite dark, they rely on echolocation to locate insects that they eat or other items. Bat echolocation works when bats emit a sound from their mouths or noses and that sound bounces off the object and is detected by their highly sensitive ears, which are tuned to recognize their own sounds.



Fall Newsletter 2021

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Sourland Cuisine: Chipotle Venison Jerky Recipe

Recipe by Hank Shaw via <https://honest-food.net/>

Total Time: 30 mins

Ingredients

- 5 to 7 pounds venison roast
- 1 cup soy sauce
- 2/3 cup sugar
- 1 cup chopped onion
- 1 head garlic, peeled and roughly chopped
- 7 ounce can of chipotles in adobo
- Juice of 2 limes
- 1 teaspoon of Instacure No. 1
- 2 tablespoons salt

Instructions

1. Put the soy, sugar, onion, garlic, chipotles and the adobo sauce, lime juice, curing salt and enough water to fill the can of chipotles into the blender and blend until smooth. Taste it (it will be a bit zippy), and add salt if you need it -- the marinade should taste pretty salty.
2. Cut the venison roast against the grain into roughly 1/4 inch slices.
3. Mix the marinade into the meat really well. The slices are going to want to stick to each other, so you need to use your hands (wear gloves if you are very sensitive to chiles) to make sure each side of every slice gets well coated with this mari-



nade. It's enough for a full 7 pounds of meat. Pack the mixture into a non-reactive (plastic, ceramic, stainless steel) container, cover and refrigerate for at least 24 hours, and up to 48 hours. How long you take it depends on your personal salt tolerance and on whether you plan on storing the finished jerky for months or not. If not, go less salty.

4. When you are ready, lay the meat on dehydrator trays in one layer. Don't let the slices of meat touch. Set the dehydrator to 160°F for 2 hours, then drop the temperature down to 145°F until the jerky is ready. You know this because the jerky is still sorta pliable, but when you bend it, the meat starts to fracture and crack a little -- this is how I like my jerky. All told, the jerky should be ready in about 6 hours. You can, if you are planning to store this at room temperature for a long time, dry it until the meat is brittle.
5. If you are using an oven, set the oven as low as it will go and use something to prop open the door, which lets air circulate inside the oven. If you have a convection oven, use it.
6. Store it in the fridge for uh... a long time. Or freeze it until the Second Coming. I vacuum seal packages of it and take them on road trips. They've been fine for weeks at room temperature this way.



The Sourland Conservancy is very grateful for the generous support of our Business Partners:

