Saving the Sourlands!

Thanks to Jim Amon for donating proceeds from sales of his new book “Seeing the Sourlands” to the Conservancy!

Volunteers planting native plants and trees in the Foraging Forest in Hopewell Borough Park.

Another sold-out crowd joined us for the 5th annual Gospel Brunch to benefit the Stoutsbury Sourland African American Museum.

An amphibian crossing guard volunteer logs the frogs and salamanders he encounters while patrolling a stretch of Mountain Road in East Amwell. (photo: Emma Lee. Listen to Amphibian Crossing Guard broadcast on WHYY.org)

Sourland Conservancy staff and members joined landowners and other PA and NJ organizations at the Delaware River Basin Commission (DRBC) meeting.
Happy Spring in the beautiful Sourlands! The Conservancy has been busy bringing people, groups, supporters and partners together to protect, preserve and celebrate the Sourland Region. We have partnered with the Stoutsburg Sourland African American Museum to develop a Sourland Center in the heart of the Sourlands on Hollow Road in Skillman, which will be the place to go for everything related to the Sourlands -- including its environmental, historical and cultural treasures. We have formed the Ash Crisis Team (ACT) to deal with the emergency caused by the infestation of emerald ash borer which is predicted to eradicate between 20-30% of Region's forest. We continue to be actively engaged in stewardship projects including reforestation and the Foraging Forest.

We published a beautiful coffee table book Seeing the Sourlands, authored by Jim Amon, which showcases the flora and fauna of our special Region. We participated in an MLK Day of Service, interviewed long-time residents of the Sourlands for a history project, and continued our fight in opposition to the dirty and unnecessary proposed PennEast pipeline project. We thank our many donors and volunteers without whom it would be impossible for us to work every day to "Save the Sourlands!" We would like to personally thank Caroline Katmann for her many years of service as executive director of the Conservancy and welcome Laurie Cleveland as the new executive director!

The Sourland Conservancy and the Stoutsburg Sourland African American Museum (SSAAM) are partnering on the development of a Sourland Center in the heart of the Sourland Region at 191 Hollow Road, Skillman, New Jersey.

The vision for the center is to create a place where folks can go for everything related to the Sourlands -- to experience its environmental, historical and cultural treasures, and to gain a richer appreciation for the paramount need to preserve, protect and celebrate this wonderful region.

The location offers an entree to the bucolic Sourland forest, the beautiful Rock Brook, access to hiking trails and Betsy Grover Park and includes the historic Mt. Zion A.M.E. Church. The Church has been lovingly restored and is now open to the public not only for viewing as a regional icon but for learning more about the African American experience in this country and right here in the Sourlands. Contact the Conservancy staff to contribute to the joint fundraising campaign for this significant and celebratory community project.
I recently joined the Cloud Appreciation Society. If you think that this is a quirky little group—something like the Flat Earth Society—think again. I am member 49,348; it is a quirky large group, with members from all over the world. The rewards of joining are a lapel pin, a “cloud selector” disk used to identify clouds and an email once a day with a picture of a cloud that was submitted by a member. I love the lapel pin, the disk, and the daily emails, but I joined this organization because I am interested in clouds as a part of my daily landscape and I wanted to learn more about them.

You may think that you learned all you wanted to learn about clouds when you were in grade school. So did I, but I was wrong. Once I started asking myself questions about clouds and not knowing the answers, I realized that I had a lot to learn. So indulge me please while I go over the basics. All air contains water vapor, which is the gaseous form of water. Warm air is able to hold more water vapor than cold air. When the sun-warmed earth warms the air above it, the warm, moisture-bearing air ascends to an altitude that cools it and reduces its ability to hold water vapor. The vapor is condensed into tiny droplets of water. These droplets of water are so tiny that there are 350 billion of them in one cubic foot of air. When light, which contains the spectrum of colors, comes through these droplets all colors are equally diffused, causing the light to appear white. We see this as a cloud. The air around the cloud is made from molecules that are smaller than the water droplets, and these smaller molecules scatter blue light more effectively than the other colors, making the cloudless portion of the sky appear blue. That has to do with the relatively short wavelength of blue light, which I will not go into here. I should add that sometimes the water vapor is condensed as ice crystals but I found it too cumbersome to say “droplets of water or ice crystals” over and over so I am only going to refer to water droplets. Please add “or ice crystals” in your mind.

After I read about the formation of clouds I found that I was unable to answer another basic question—since clouds are made of water droplets and water is heavier than air, why don’t the clouds sink to the earth? What keeps them aloft? I was staggered to learn that a cloud can, in fact, weigh a million pounds or more. But each individual droplet is so small that gravity has very little affect on it. Further, the process of condensing water vapor releases heat, which causes the air to expand and become more buoyant. That buoyancy, along with the continuing thermal of earth-warmed air, keeps the cloud aloft.

But that wasn’t the end of questions about clouds for me. Next, I wondered why some clouds are gray and why the bottoms of nearly all clouds are gray or at least grayish? This answer is pretty intuitive; when clouds are thin they let the light through easily but as they thicken they begin to block light. That is why the bottoms of otherwise white clouds appear gray and why really thick clouds appear entirely gray.

My next question was about rain. What triggers the droplets to become raindrops? The water droplets in a cloud coalesce around particles of dust, smoke, and any kind of grit or—most often—around droplets of ice. The coalesced droplet attracts other droplets until the droplet is big enough to fall as a raindrop.

Snow is produced when the ice crystals in a cloud coalesce and become too heavy to stay aloft. Hail is a little trickier. Hailstones are produced within cumulonimbus clouds, which are very tall thunderclouds, when the lower portion of these clouds is warmer than the upper portion. Strong updrafts inside the storm clouds wisk raindrops into the very cold portion and they freeze. Then a downdraft takes them to the warmer portion of the cloud where they melt a bit and coalesce with other raindrops. Then another updraft takes the drop back up for more freezing. This can happen several times over until the hailstone is too heavy to be carried up again and it falls to the earth. If you have ever looked closely at a hailstone you can see that it is made of balls of ice, one inside the other.

Lightning and thunder also come from clouds. Meteorologists agree that there is much that we don’t know about lightning, but a short explanation of its cause is that some large clouds develop regions of positively charged ions as well as regions of negatively charged ions. Lightning results when convection currents cause the positively and negatively charged ions to crash into each other. Thunder comes from the lightning bolt. The bolt instantaneously turns the air around it to over 50,000 degrees Fahrenheit—five times hotter than the sun’s surface. This heating occurs within a few millionths of a second, causing an explosive expansion of the air around the bolt. That explosive expansion creates waves that we hear as thunder.

Meteorologists have identified ten major types of clouds, and most of the major types have one or more sub-type, so there are more than one hundred types of clouds, each with a Latin name. I am not going to try to describe the different types. You can join the Cloud Appreciation Society yourself and get your own cloud selector disk.

In 1896 a committee of meteorologists held a conference to standardize nomenclature for clouds. They created a list of ten genera of clouds, and number nine on that list was cumulonimbus, the largest cloud of all. Cumulonimbus clouds can span from 2,000 feet above the earth to 60,000 feet. So you are on the largest cloud in the sky when you are “on cloud 9.”
We are the solution.
By Laurie Cleveland, Executive Director

The news is bleak. Over one million trees in our beautiful Sourland forest will die within the next few years. That’s twenty percent of all trees - in our gorgeous public parks and preserves, in my yard and probably in yours. If you’re not already treating every ash tree - and continue to do so - it will almost certainly perish. In some areas (including Baldpate Mountain), the total tree loss will be much higher. This will be devastating - to all of the humans and animals who depend on the forest to provide clean water, food, and shelter.

The emerald ash borer is on track to kill every last ash tree. The state has released parasitic wasps to target these pests and allow the next generation of ash to survive, but they will not be able to save this generation.

We know that the Sourland forest’s understory is degraded. Tree saplings are not in place to fill in the gaps. When the canopy opens and sunlight reaches the forest floor, invasive species like autumn olive, barberry and multiflora rose will thrive. Native plants and animals, whose numbers are already in decline, will struggle to survive. Development, deer browse, disease, and invasive species are to blame. We are the solution.

The Sourland Conservancy’s mission to protect, promote and preserve has never been more critical than it is right now. Our staff and volunteers are partnering with organizations and municipalities throughout the region on stewardship projects, stream monitoring efforts and advocacy initiatives. Members like you will make the difference!

How can you help? Plant native trees, shrubs, and flowers in your own yard. Reduce your lawn size, protect “volunteer” seedlings from deer browse, and plant more! If you don’t have room to plant at home, come plant with us, spread the word, donate and volunteer in other ways! We need you.

Visit www.sourland.org to learn how you and your family and friends can help us “Save the Sourlands” together!

SPRING STROLL
~Carolyn Edelmann

it might be enough to share a hike tread the rocky, root-ridged path together seek spring’s ephemerals before their canopy leaves out --cutting off light listen for new frogs in old ponds follow languid strokes of polliwogs, more shadow than substance, than truth itself stop for the box turtle --huge across our trail first tucking her head deep inside that intricate shell then, trusting, not moving in place, looking from one to the other her bright eyes blinking connection

THE POET’S CORNER

Stewardship
by Carolyn Klaube

Stewardship is one of the principal goals of the Sourland Conservancy. Historically, our mission has been to educate residents and visitors to the Sourlands about good stewardship practices with the goal of preserving this unique ecosystem. In the last several years our vision has expanded to include hands-on fieldwork. Restoration projects involve the removal of alien invasive plants in our forests and planting of native trees, shrubs and flowers. We are engaging volunteers in several innovative partnership initiatives including stream monitoring, creating pollinator pockets, and a Foraging Forest project to provide edible fruits for humans and wildlife.

Sourland Conservancy is developing and strengthening partnerships with landowners, nonprofit organizations, environmental organizations and municipalities. The goal is to assist these organizations with restoration projects in the Sourlands by training a core group of volunteers to provide that assistance. We are also working to develop a stream monitoring program that will train volunteers to collect data of sufficient quality that can be submitted to the water quality exchange, which is a network run by the EPA and state partnerships. We are working with Lambertville Goes Wild, Hunterdon Land Trust, NJ Watershed Ambassadors and The Watershed Institute to host and present the workshops. Please check out the Stewardship page on our website to learn more or volunteer.

Welcome to REACH Interns

Sarah Tobias enjoys spending time outdoors. She believes interning is the perfect way to learn about ecosystems and get involved in the preservation of the Sourlands.

Carmen Bisignano wants to give back to the community and contribute to the ensured survival of threatened plants and animals.
Three Hundred Years of Family History

By Andrea Bonette, Emeritus Trustee

Since the advent of genealogy searches like “23 and Me” Americans have been able to discover facts about their family history that sometimes go back generations. One Hopewell resident, however, has researched her ancestry the old-fashioned way: museum archives and other paper trails. Marian Snook Allen was born on Old Mill Road near Pennington. Because Marian’s mother worked full time, Grandmother Rachel Snook lived with the family and looked after Marian. Grammy was a talented seamstress, quilter, and cook, but had never gone to school and only learned to write her own name when young Marian taught her to do so. Over the years Marian heard bits and pieces about the family, but because Grammy Snook was not very interested in this topic Marian had to find other sources of information. The Hopewell Museum was an especially productive source of information. Marian also has the family tree dating back to 1760 which she acquired from her cousin Colonel Russell Snook of the New Jersey State Police.

The first generation of Snooks, William and Catherine, were granted 644 acres of land in the Hopewell area in the early 1700s. They had nine children including William Jr., whose son Daniel fathered Amos Snook in 1807. When William Sr. passed away he left the 644 acres to his widow Catherine, who in turn divided the lands among her nine children. According to the custom of the time, the best farmland parcels went to the sons while the rocky pieces went to the daughters.

While researching the deeds for a Snook property on Stony Brook road I came across a remarkable document from 1850. Sarah Snook sold the land to a John Cook. It appears that Sarah could not write her name so she made an “X” on the deed and someone else wrote in her name for her. Furthermore, the document form included this statement: “On a private examination before me, separate and apart from her husband, did acknowledge that she executed the same voluntarily without any threats, fear, or compulsion from her said husband.” These words had been crossed out on the form which leads to the conclusion that Sarah was unmarried or widowed at the time. It also leads to a conclusion that wives were not very independent in the mid-nineteenth century.

Daniel’s son Amos fathered twelve children - so that in addition to Marian’s direct ancestors there are quite a few other Snook family lines. Many of their names are found in local history books such as A History of East Amwell 1700-1800 and Hopewell: A Historical Geography. There were, among others, Snook family homes on Mountain Church Road, Stony Brook Road, and Snook’s Mill Road (vacated in 1866), all three in the Sourlands. Records show that John Snook, father of Peter and Philip, owned a mill and 102 acres on Stony Brook Road at a time when stream flow could actually power a working mill. Peter Snook served in the Revolutionary War and thereafter received a pension of $57/year. In 1795 he was paid 16 shillings and sixpence for three days of cutting a neighboring farmer’s grass. His brother Philip also served in the Patriot army, as a captain in the Hunterdon County Militia, throughout the war. He was shot by a musket ball in his thigh during the Battle of Monmouth. After the war he owned 265 acres of land, four horses, five horned cattle, and three pigs. Army records indicate that Philip was referred to as “The Dutchman.”

A century later, in 1898, Marian’s great uncle Asher Snook was driving his horse and buggy into Hopewell when they were hit and killed by a speeding train. Some family members, including Amos and Daniel, are buried in graves marked by very simple headstones in the Larison Corner Cemetery. Later generations are buried in the Highland Cemetery in Hopewell Borough at the edge of the Sourlands.

Marian’s Grammy Rachel, born in 1862 into the Stilwell family on Snydertown Road in East Amwell, married John Snook in 1882. They were members of the Mountain Christian Church (now a private home) on Mountain Church Road. Her two Stilwell sisters married two of John Snook’s brothers. Rachel and John’s son, Melvin Snook, married Emma Murphy and the young couple lived on various farms in the area including a house in the Wertsville hamlet at the base of what is now Rileyville Road. Three of Emma’s children were traveling by horse and buggy and once were frightened at night by three ghostly white shapes gliding along the road. Upon closer inspection the “ghosts” turned out to be three runaway heifers with white rumps! The young couple soon moved to the house where Marian was born, on Old Mill Road near Pennington. But the family kept their ties to the Sourlands. Marian remembers as a young adult driving Grammy and Aunt Josephine up through the Sourland Mountains, sharing many happy memories as they drove along. Grammy was especially fond of seeing her old friends and sharing a traditional turkey dinner and homemade desserts at the “Harvest Home Festival” at the Mountain Church.

It has been my observation, both from doing interviews over the years as well as from my own personal experience, that young people are very busy building their own lives - and only when they’re in their forties and fifties do they begin to wonder about the formative people, places, and events that extend far back in time before they were born. Some families, like the Snooks, have records going back 300 years. Others may have to rely on anecdotal accounts from contemporary relatives. I do think in any case it is enormously enriching to discover the very important factors that contribute to who you are as a person.
Hiking the Sourlands: Spring/Summer 2020

Saturday, May 2, 10 am-12 pm, Thompson Preserve, Connecting Kids with Nature: Connect your children with nature on this creative family hike led by Nicole Langdo, founder of Painted Oak Nature School, a progressive nature-based preschool and kindergarten located in the Hopewell Valley. Bugs and critters, flowers and rocks, fairies and elves: imagine what can be discovered in the morning outdoors? Suitable for children ages 3 and up, accompanied by a parent or guardian.

Saturday, May 9, 10 am-12 pm, Rockhopper Trail, Late Spring Wildflowers: On this hike, we should see some of the longer-blooming spring ephemerals, like Spring Beauty and Rue Anemone, the lovely Perfoliate Bellwort, Violet Wood Sorrel, many species of ferns unfurling, and the spectacular, diminutive Showy Orchis. We’ll also keep an eye out for pollinators and other residents and visitors to this lush woodland. Mary Anne Borge is a naturalist, photographer, and author of the-natural-web.org. She is the team leader for Lambertville Goes Wild, an instructor at Bowman’s Hill Wildflower Preserve, a Pennsylvania Master Naturalist, and the associate editor of Butterfly Gardener magazine.

Saturday, May 30, 10 am-12 pm, Prudys Point, Archeology: Come and discover a range of cultural landscape features along the Alexakuen Creek with archaeologist and Sourland enthusiast Ian Burrow. We will see walls, dams, building foundations, ruins, plus a feature that may have more than one interpretation. See what you think. Note: this trail has some steep stone steps and stepping stones across the creek. We will meet at the Alexakuen WMA parking lot on the west side of Lambertville-Rocktown Road.

Saturday, June 5, 9 pm-11 pm, Hunterdon County Sourland Mountain Preserve, Full Moon Owl Hike: Led by Jared Flesher, director of The Creature Show, and Jeff Hoagland, education director at the Stony Brook-Millstone Watershed Association.

Thank you, 2019 Donors

Sourland Conservancy
Sourland Journal

Members make a difference. Thank you for your support!

Membership:  __ Individual $35  __Family $50  __Premium Family $100  __Sponsor $250
  __Premium Sponsor $500  __Robert Garrett Society $1,000  __Other

Name: ____________________________________________________________________________  __ Recurring Donation

Address: ________________________________________________________________________________________________

Phone: __________________________  E-Mail: ______________________________________________________________

We will not provide your e-mail address to any person or organization without your permission.

__Please do not publish my name.
__Please contact me about volunteer opportunities with the Sourland Conservancy.

Sourland Cuisine:  Venison Hand Pies - A recipe by Ronni Lundy from the cookbook, “Victuals: An Appalachian Journey, with Recipes”

Ingredients

DOUGH
- 2 ¼ cup all-purpose flour, plus more for dusting
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1/2 teaspoon baking powder
- 3/4 cup skim milk
- 1/2 cup lard or solid shortening

FILLING
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 pound ground venison
- 1 cup finely chopped green cabbage
- ¼ shredded carrot
- ½ cup diced onion
- ½ tablespoon Spanish smoked paprika
- 1 teaspoon ground allspice
- Dash of cayenne pepper
- ½ teaspoon kosher salt
- ½ cup of warm water
- 1 tablespoon tomato paste
- ½ tablespoon sorghum syrup

Instructions

MAKE THE DOUGH
1. The dough needs to rest for 2 hours before you roll it, so begin with plenty of time. In a bowl mix the flour with the salt and baking powder. In a small saucepan set over low heat, heat the milk until bubbles appear around the edges of the pan, and then remove it from the heat.

2. In a large bowl, combine the hot milk with the lard. Stir with a fork until the lard is neatly melted- there should be some pea-sized pieces of lard left.

3. Add the flour mixture and stir with a fork just until a shaggy dough forms. Transfer the dough to a lightly floured surface and knead until smooth. Roll the dough to form a wide log about 6 inches long, wrap it tightly in plastic wrap, and refrigerate until chilled, at least 2 hours.

MAKE THE FILLING
1. Heat the olive oil in a large skillet over medium heat. When the oil is very hot, crumble the venison into the pan. When it begins to brown, stir in the cabbage, carrot, onion, paprika, nutmeg, allspice, cayenne, and salt. Continue to cook over medium heat, stirring occasionally, for about 6 minutes, until the onions are transparent and the other vegetables are al dente.

2. In a small bowl, quickly mix the warm water, tomato paste, and the sorghum together until dissolved. Pour this liquid over the meat mixture and continue to cook, stirring, until it is absorbed about 30 seconds. Transfer the mixture to a bowl and allow it to cool while you prepare the crusts.

3. Use a lightly floured fork to crimp the edges, and pierce the top of each pie with a fork. Use a spatula to transfer the pies to a large, lightly floured baking sheet. Repeat with the remaining dough and filling.

4. Bake for 25 minutes or until the crusts turn golden. Remove and allow to cool until they can be handled before biting in.

Send your favorite venison recipe to info@sourland.org!
Spring 2020

Sourland Conservancy, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization
Printed on recycled paper

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