

Wissahickon Nature Club

October 11, Sarada Sangameswaran will present **From Black to Green: The Story of Pittsburgh Botanic Garden.** Join staff from Pittsburgh Botanic Garden to learn how they are transforming an old coal-mining site into a beautiful botanic garden. Pittsburgh Botanic Garden is at the forefront of land reclamation in Western Pennsylvania. This presentation provides a brief history of the Garden and details the land reclamation projects that continue to restore our natural habitats. They will show pictures of the established areas of the Garden and their future plans for creating a vibrant place for visitors to enjoy.

<http://pittsburghbotanicgarden.org>



Don't miss our next program. November 8, 7:30 pm. **Polly Shaw** will present **Making of Moraine - the Creation of a State Park.** This program describes the time period from 1946 when Preston and Arthur met, until 1970 when the new park was formally dedicated. Moraine State Park has been characterized as a great achievement in environmental engineering achievement so we'll look at how the land use was changed from one of coal mining, oil drilling, farming, and swamp land, into today's 16,725 acre park with a 3,225 acre lake.

For information regarding Pennsylvania's local nature clubs, please visit their websites, or you can opt to join the clubs and receive their newsletters by snail-mail.

Botanical Society of Western Pennsylvania
Loree Speedy 724.518.6022 loreespeedy@gmail.com
<http://www.botsocwpa.org/>

Fern Hollow Nature Center
Sam McClain-Capezuto, Director
412.741.6136
<http://www.fhnc.org/>

Outside My Window Outings Kate St. John 412.421.1566
www.birdsoutsidemymwindow.org/events/

ANNOUNCEMENTS

TREASURER'S REPORT ACCORDING TO TREASURER, DIANNE MACHESNEY

Balance as of September 13, 2018	1318.43
Check to FHNC	(200.00)
Deposit of dues	120.00
New balance:	\$1238.43

Dianne has received dues from 70% of the membership.

Dues are due.
\$10 individual
\$15 family

Coming Up

Our Holiday Party is coming up. Who will volunteer to make our Favors and continue our tradition?

Worth Repeating

Autumn burned brightly, a running flame through the mountains, a torch flung to the trees.
Faith Baldwin, *American Family*

Three Rivers Birding Club
Bob VanNewkirk, President
412.366.1694
www.3rbc.org

Western Pennsylvania Mushroom Club
wpamushroomclub.org.

Cecily Franklin 412.781.6581 <cs4wpmc@gmail.com>



Photos by Chuck Tague

Fright Night

By Chuck Tague

One crow on the thatch,
Soon death lifts the latch.

The late afternoon sun intensified the colors of the October leaves: orange-red maples, yellow aspens and dull green Slippery Elms. A bronze patina coated the mustard-yellow leaves on the ash trees. The sky was a deep blue sky and a touch of silver lined one edge of the two fluffy clouds.

Cheery . . . Cheery. Bluebirds chortled as they passed overhead. I splashed through a puddle and crunched some dried leaves. A goldfinch landed on a stalk of New England Asters beside the trail. I twisted open a milkweed pod and watched the silken parachutes lift across the field. What a glorious day.

A cold wind cut through my coat and a shiver shook my body; a shiver not from the cold. I realized the autumn splendor would soon be gone. The colorful leaves, the birds, the songs and the murmur of the aspens, like everything in nature are fleeting and transitory. Just then a single crow flew low overhead. It looked down and cawed, as if to remind me that I, too, was mortal; that my life was as fragile and ephemeral as a milkweed seed.

I remembered an old fortune-telling rhyme:

One crow for sorrow,
Two for birth,
Three for a wedding,
Four for mirth.

I shivered again.

Suddenly a huge bird rose from behind a bush. Two, three, four vultures frantically flapped until they cleared the trees. They circled around me as if to say, "Hurry, we want our due."

The strong smell of death overwhelmed me. I turned away from the stench and swallowed my stomach.

Something rustled in the brush. A 'possum scurried across the trail in front of me. It dragged a chunk of the vultures' prize. Attached to the flesh in the 'possum's mouth was the neck of the dead deer. Attached to the chain of vertebrae was the deer's head with its skull partially exposed. As the critter hustled for cover the skull caught on the trunk of a shrub and broke off. The teeth were frozen in a hideous grin as I walked past.

The wind picked up and the temperature dropped. Gray and gloom darkened the sky. A gust of wind blasted through some elms. All their leaves lifted off like a flock of frightened birds. The suddenly bare branches probed the emptiness of the twilight like so many fingers grasping desperately for something just out of reach.



Virginia Opossum

On the horizon the fiery sunset flickered through the grayness like a reflection of hell. The wind rustled the leaves and something I never saw crashed through the bushes. I walked along until the western sky was gray and the hills and the trees lost all their color. Darkness closed around me. I felt alone. The world that minutes before was vast and colorful was now drab and confining. In all directions distant dogs bayed, yipped and howled at unseen creatures.

The wind stopped suddenly. The world was dark and silent. I froze. A shadow glided over my head and landed in a dead tree. A screech owl moaned. In the distance a coyote howled.

"Good show," I thought, "I love this time of year." My car was not far down the trail.

Along the road home I saw a hand-painted sign, "Haunted Hayride this Friday." Another read "Community Fright Night, \$5."

These staged events are nothing more than fakery and "special effects"; feeble attempts to duplicate what I had just experienced. I had walked the edge between day and night, man and nature, reality and imagination, life and death.

As I drove through my neighborhood I saw a few lighted jack o' lanterns, some ghost-like sheets hanging from a tree and one nylon spider web draped over a shrub, but there were not nearly as many ghoulish artifacts as there used to be.

I poured a glass of strong cider and turned on the news.

"Today's headlines: In a note left at the site of the latest shooting the Beltway sniper warns our children are not safe anywhere and at any time. A White House spokesman says war with Iraq is unavoidable. Homeland security officials warn of another terrorist attack. North Korea will soon be capable of launching nuclear weapons. In Israel today . . ."

I turned off the television and checked the lock on the door. Fear takes the fun out of being afraid.

Have a safe Halloween.