contents

1 **nature sustains humans who sustain nature.**
We cannot create a community that cares about conservation without first providing access to open space.

6 **making meadows.**
Restoring 90 acres of former row crops to native meadows is just the latest accomplishment at Green Hills Preserve.

4 NEWS

9 CARING FOR NATURE
pay attention. be astonished. tell about it.

10 SAVING OPEN SPACE
recent land conservation successes.

15 CONNECTING PEOPLE TO THE OUTDOORS
a weekend. a way of life.

#naturallands

facebook.com/NatLands twitter.com/natlands instagram.com/natural.lands

cover: an enthusiastic participant in our Mighty Mud event at Stroud Preserve this summer, *photo by:* Mae Axelrod

natural lands
number 151 • fall/winter 2017

editor Kirsten Werner
art director Holly M. Harper
contributors Dan Barringer, Suzanne Barton, Oliver Bass, Kelsey Boyd, Mandy Dollar, Ann Hausmann, Molly Morrison, Erin McCormick, Sean Quinn, Rick Tralies

Natural Lands

Natural Lands
Hildacy Preserve
1031 Palmers Mill Road, Media, PA 19063
t 610-353-5587 | *f* 610-353-0517
info@natlands.org | natlands.org

The official registration and financial information of Natural Lands Trust, Inc. may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling toll free, within Pennsylvania, 1-800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.

Information filed with the Attorney General concerning this charitable solicitation and the percentage of contributions received by the charity during the last reporting period that were dedicated to the charitable purpose may be obtained from the Attorney General of the State of New Jersey by calling 973-504-6215 and is available on the internet at www.state.nj.us/lps/ca/charfrm.htm. Registration with the Attorney General does not imply endorsement.

ACCREDITED LAND TRUST ACCREDITATION COMMISSION

Stroud Preserve | West Chester, PA | 571 acres

nature sustains humans who sustain nature.

BY MOLLY MORRISON, PRESIDENT

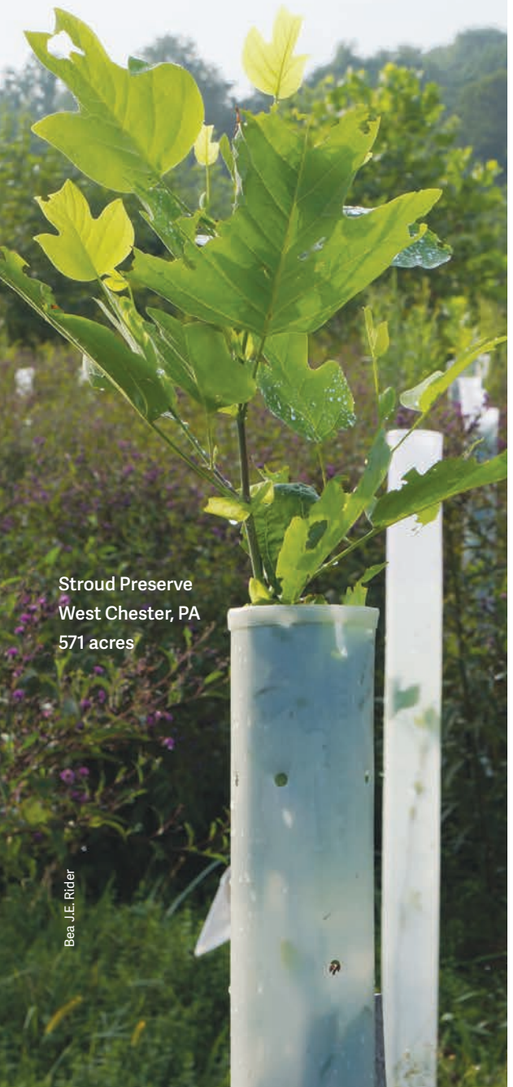
Overstimulated by the pace of change, divided by politics or beliefs, and challenged to find and hold onto those things that bind us together. We are living in an unsettling time.

Many of us are searching for those things that unify us to a degree that is greater than those that rend us apart. I would propose that among the resources we share—which cross generations and geography and cultures—it is land and the nature it sustains that have the greatest power to unite us.

Conservation, which Natural Lands has practiced for almost 65 years, reflects values that

Ian Tittmann

In undertaking acts of restoration, we also restore our relationship with nature.



Stroud Preserve
West Chester, PA
571 acres

Bea J.E. Rider

blend the ecological significance of land—broad, sweeping, ineffable—with human values, which are personal and profound.

Each acre we have preserved is proof of this. Conservation begins with a landowner's choice; one rooted in values both universal and specific to the individual. A farmer may love her land for different reasons than the owner of a country estate, but the choice to ensure their beloved properties remain as they are is derived from the same impulse.

Tim Lutz, a professor at West Chester University, has proposed a framework for understanding the differing ways in which people place value on nature. His construct brings together those of us who see the natural world through aesthetic, ecological, spiritual, or emotional lenses with those who see it for its utilitarian purposes. In all but one of the 10 categories he identifies there is a common thread: we value the role that nature plays in our lives.

The challenge that conservationists face is how to enliven this value in a broader constituency so our work might be sustained.

In her book *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants*, author Robin Wall Kimmerer makes the case that knowing nature and loving nature activate us to defend, protect, and celebrate. "Action on behalf of life transforms. As we work to heal the earth, the earth heals us."

Natural Lands is getting ready to put a more public face on a fundraising effort that we have been advancing quietly as our Campaign for Humans and Nature—a campaign underpinned by the notion that "nature sustains humans who sustain nature."

Practicing conservation that emphasizes the relationship between people and nature and that makes the case for land conservation as a tool for changing lives creates a broader, more-sustainable constituency for conservation. The ethos of Natural Lands can be summarized as this: The land's protection is just the first step in a broader conservation process. Just as you cannot put a bell jar over a piece of land and believe that the natural resources you have protected will thrive, you cannot create a community that cares about conservation and its many benefits without first providing access to open space.

"Caring is not abstract," says Kimmerer. "The circle of ecological compassion that we feel is enlarged by direct experience of the living world, and shrunken by its lack."

How do we as a community and as individuals connect over land and nature? Cultural geographers, anthropologists, sociologists, and urban planners study why certain places hold special meaning to particular people or animals, resulting in a "sense of place."

Environmental psychologists have quantified links between exposure to natural environments in childhood and environmental preferences later in life. Learning about surrounding environments during childhood is strongly influenced by the direct experience of playing, as well as through the roles of family, culture, and community. A child's experience with land forms part of that individual's identity and therefore forms the baseline for how they act and what they value during adulthood.

One of my distinct pleasures as the president of Natural Lands is connecting with people who love nature. I usually ask them to describe which of their experiences in nature were the most formative. Without exception, the stories that I hear hearken to their childhoods. The looks on the faces of my companions change as their minds travel to a different time. They always smile in the remembering of it: the exhilarating canoe ride down a swollen Wissahickon Creek, the summertime visits to a grandparent's farm, the hiking trips in the White Mountains, even the vacant acre in the neighborhood where kids played after supper on summer nights.

Without the land that Natural Lands protects; without the plants that thrive in that space; without the animals, bugs, and birds that rely on these lands as their homes, our lives are diminished. Our sense of place is unalterably changed.

All of the land we preserve bears the imprint of centuries of human impact. It is not possible or even necessarily desirable to return conditions to an earlier time. But it is necessary to take action to mend the worst of the indignities, to practice best management that restores degraded land and heals impaired waters. In undertaking acts of restoration, we also restore our relationship with nature.

Countless visitors to our nature preserves, beginning at our first preserve in 1959, have experienced this connection first hand. They rely on these special places to explore, relax, refresh—and to be changed.

But the opportunities for connecting to nature are abundant, and we believe our responsibility includes supporting those communities for which access to nature is more challenging.

In Coatesville, Chester County, our work with the community to create safe local parks, including one with access to nature play, is just as important to residents as our 1,263-acre ChesLen Preserve, which while only 10 miles away may be difficult to access for some. In Pottstown, where Natural Lands interacts with all fourth and fifth graders, snorkeling in French Creek at our Crow's Nest Preserve in pursuit of invertebrate inhabitants is an adventure for these children as indelible as diving the Great Barrier Reef.

When you experience nature you learn to love nature. It is then that you become its protector and defender. And it is then that you realize we must care for and protect land as if our children's future depends on it. Because, of course, it does. ■

Just as you cannot put a bell jar over a piece of land and believe that the natural resources you have protected will thrive, you cannot create a community that cares about conservation and its many benefits without first providing access to open space.

Creek snorkeling at Crow's Nest Preserve | Elverson, PA | 621 acres

Dana Lewis/NorthBay