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FROM THE SCHUYLKILL CENTER FOR ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION | WINTER 2019/20

year of action

JOIN US IN 2020

By Mike Weilbacher, Executive Director

THE NEW YEAR 2020 promises to be pivotal on a number of fronts, but especially the environment. The increasing urgency of the climate crisis has sparked higher levels of activism by new, youth-led groups like the Sunrise Movement. Swedish teenager Greta Thunberg's lonely 2018 climate strikes in front of the Swedish parliament has blossomed into climate strikes of millions of kids skipping school across the world.

The presidential election near the year's end promises to be not only loud, but will have an outsized impact on environmental policy, with major implications for how America, and thus the world, responds to climate change.

But 2020 also marks the 50th anniversary of Earth Day. Philadelphia was center stage for Earth Days in 1970 and 1990, and the global holiday is now credited with launching the environmental movement. Celebrated by over a billion people each year, this April's Earth Day promises to be huge.

In recognition of all of the above, the Schuylkill Center declares 2020 as our Year of Action and will flavor much of our programming—including our own Earth Day festival—around this concept. Nature Preschoolers will take relevant actions;

our Art Department will join in the fun too. So will Land and Facilities, and many programs coming from our Education team.

We're also asking you to take personal actions at home and in your workplace. How can you personally assist in cooling the climate and preserving species? We assume as a member and friend of our Center, you likely recycle and conserve water and electricity, probably try to create less waste. So what next? Say you'd like to step up in our Year of Action-- thank you! What might you do?

Turn to page 3 for the Schuylkill Center's list of Top 10 things you can do in 2020 to become part of our Year of Action, and move the needle on the world's issues. Hope you'll join our campaign. ✈



INSPIRING MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS BETWEEN PEOPLE AND NATURE

director's cut

THE KIDS ARE RIGHT ON CLIMATE



IN SEPTEMBER and again in December, thousands of local high school and college kids joined millions of kids across the planet in purposefully not doing the one thing adults ask them to do. They did not go to school. Instead, inspired by Swedish activist Greta Thunberg—at 16, the youngest to be named Time's Person of the Year—they marched on city halls and state capitals, protesting adult inaction on climate change.

Holding grimly funny signs like "I'm missing my math test for this" and, my favorite, "The seas are rising and so are we," these millennials and Gen Zers are literally fighting for their future. Because at that same moment in time, Venice was drowning under record floods and Australia suffering horrific drought and forest fires while America continues to be paralyzed by political infighting.

In our Year of Action here at the Center, as these pages detail, we promise to continue giving you up-to-the-minute information about the climate—and other issues as well—while offering thoughts on how we might cool the climate.

But as an aging Boomer, I am humbled by the power these kids are building and thrilled by the movement they are creating. And as an

environmental educator who has been teaching and writing about this issue for more than 30 years, I am saddened and frustrated, even frankly embarrassed, by my generation's inability to move off of square one on this issue. That competent adults are still debating whether or not the issue is real, willfully ignoring the painfully obvious signals the earth is sending us, is inconceivable and maddening. We have been fiddling while the world burns. For 30 years.

These kids sense something adults seem to have missed: that we are running out of time. Whatever predictions science makes about the climate, climate beats the prediction. Oceans are rising more rapidly, wildfires are burning hotter, ice caps are melting more quickly, species are vanishing faster: it is all unfolding sooner than expected. It is here, it is now.

Next time the kids strike at City Hall, look for the Schuylkill Center to join them.

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Year of Action

OUR TOP 10 THINGS YOU CAN DO IN 2020

By Mike Weilbacher, Executive Director

IN THE YEAR OF ACTION, you'd like to help cool the climate, preserve biological diversity, conserve water, and more, but you can't yet afford an electric vehicle (that day is coming!).

Here are 10 powerful actions anyone can take just about any day to improve the health of our planet. Jump into the New Year by tackling some of these.

1. Eat less beef. In best-selling novelist Jonathan Safran Foer's latest book, "We Are the Weather," a nonfiction work connecting diet to climate change, he offers that "if cows were a country, they would rank third in greenhouse gas emissions, after China and the United States." It's true: cows heat climate. The lower on the food chain we eat, the cooler we become. So yes, try that Impossible Burger, and while you don't have to give up beef completely, the more you fold plants into your diet, the more people the planet can support.

2. Plant a tree. Trees absorb and store greenhouse gases, create a cooler microclimate around your home, increase your property's value, PLUS reduce stormwater runoff. Plant trees at home, here at the Center, or anywhere.

3. Use less paper. In our paper-free society, the average American still consumes 700 pounds of paper annually-- too much of it wasted. Our staff here is beginning a concerted effort to use less and waste less. Join us in this important effort. One great place to begin: your toilet tissue can easily be 100% post-consumer, even tree-free. Explore the options.

4. Help our pollinators. Bees, especially native ones, are taking a huge hit from modern agriculture. But they're only now getting long-overdue attention, and many people and places are planting bee-friendly plants and installing bee hotels, which need to be done cautiously. Still, native plants protect native pollinators, the bedrock of local ecosystems.



5. Consume less single-use plastics. The extent of pollution caused by plastic waste is only now coming to light—microplastics are everywhere, from the oceans to our bodies, with unknown consequences. Philadelphia's coming ban on plastic bags is a great start, part of a movement catching on worldwide. But I wrap my sandwiches in washable waxed cloth (on sale in our gift shop), and have worked hard on reducing my use of plastics. Jump on this important bandwagon.

6. Lower your carbon footprint. Seriously, continue finding new and more ways to burn less fossil fuels and making yourself more efficient. Whatever it takes.

7. Join an organization. Thanks for being a member of the Schuylkill Center-- we appreciate it. There is a universe of nonprofits working on issues and causes, from protecting individual organisms to preserving whole ecosystems. Pick a handful, and support them as generously as you can.

8. Learn. As an education center, this is one of the most important things you can do, and we are living in a golden age of extraordinary books on climate change and biodiversity by writers like Naomi Klein, Elisabeth Kolbert, and Nathaniel Rich. Bring these to your book clubs.

9. Get outside! However much time you spend in the outdoors, spend more. Green time not only reduces your blood pressure and calms your stress levels, it allows you to see nature up close and personal. Time in nature allows you to place your fingers directly on the pulse of the planet-- are warblers returning north? Are flowers blooming early? Time outside tells you.

10. Become a climate voter. Climate is **FINALLY** getting its due in this election cycle, only 30 years too late. Can you imagine if millions of Americans became single-issue voters, and that issue was climate change? That would be a game changer. 🐘

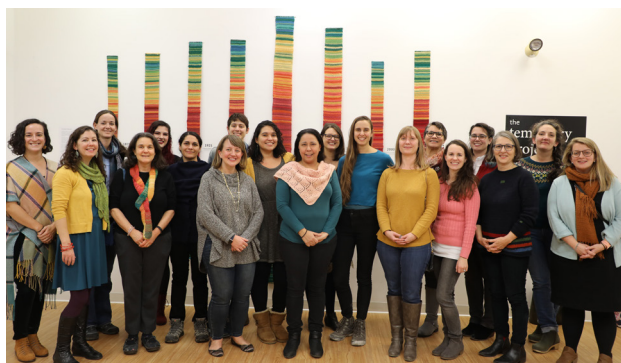


tempestry update

KNITTING AND CROCHETING CLIMATE CHANGE

By Christina Catanese, Director of Environmental Art

THIS YEAR, THE SCHUYLKILL CENTER COORDINATED 38 VOLUNTEER KNITTERS AND CROCHETERS to create a collection of Tempestries (or temperature tapestries) that shows Philadelphia's daily high temperatures every 5 years from 1875 to 2018 as part of a global climate data visualization project.



AT THE EXHIBIT'S DECEMBER OPENING, TEMPESTRY KNITTERS GATHERED TO CELEBRATE THEIR WORK

A Tempestry, or temperature tapestry, is a wallhanging that represents the daily high temperature for a given year and location, with January at the bottom and December at the top, like a cuddly bar graph. All Tempestries use the same yarn colors and temperature ranges, creating an immediately recognizable and globally comparable mosaic of shifting temperatures over time. The Tempestry Project was founded in 2017 by Justin Connelly, Marissa Connelly, and Emily McNeil in Anacortes, WA. Since

then, hundreds of Tempestries have been made for locations all over the world. The Philadelphia Tempestries reveal change over time, and illustrate how climate change is impacting our region. We can visually see the shift, as climate models predict for Philadelphia, to a hotter, wetter world – changes that are already happening. In 1875, our first Tempestry, there were only 7 days over 90°. In 2018, there were 48 days.

The 30-piece Philadelphia collection is currently on long-term display here at the Schuylkill Center. After a short run in our art gallery, it will move into the auditorium, our largest public event space. A smaller 8-piece collection will be available to loan for temporary display at events, festivals, or exhibitions. Please contact Christina at 215-853-6269 if you're interested in hosting the Tempestry Collection in your favorite public space. ✂



20 years of environmental art at the Schuylkill Center

OPENS JANUARY 30

FOUNDED IN 2000, our environmental art program has brought hundreds of artists to the Schuylkill Center to present contemporary art work in the gallery and on our trails. Our next exhibition celebrates the art program's history, reflecting on the past, present, and future of environmental art on this land.

RIGHT: JANE INGRAM ALLEN WAS THE VERY FIRST ARTIST IN RESIDENCE AT THE SCHUYLKILL CENTER IN 2001. SHE CREATED PAPER FROM INVASIVE PLANTS GATHERED HERE TO CREATE A MAP OF THE PROPERTY.



from the clinic

GOING HOME

By Staci Vernick, clinic volunteer and new board member

"THIS IS THE PERFECT SPOT," I thought, surveying the forest. Acorns from a nearby oak littered the banks of a small creek, an abundant source of food and water. Fallen trees and shrubby underbrush promised shelter. Wild, natural, safe.

Three young gray squirrels thumped and bumped in the pet carrier as I set it on the ground, like they sensed this late October day was a big one. Indeed, it was. After spending most of the summer at the Schuylkill Center's Wildlife Clinic, they were ready to return to their natural home.

As I gently opened the carrier, two squirrels immediately shot out and bounded happily away into the woods. The third hung back at first, then raced after its companions to freedom.



STACI VERNICK HELPS PATIENTS AT THE WILDLIFE CLINIC

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

WHY ANIMALS OVERWINTER AT THE WILDLIFE CLINIC

By Rebecca Michelin, Director of the Wildlife Clinic

WHILE DAILY ACTIVITY CERTAINLY SLOWS DOWN AFTER THE SUMMER RUSH, the Wildlife Clinic is far from empty. The number of patient admissions drops in the fall but the types of patients and reasons for admission change; most animals that are admitted at this time of year are suffering serious injuries and are in need of long-term care and medical treatment. Late-season babies are still coming through our doors in October and November, mostly gray and flying squirrels. Squirrels born as part of the second litter of the season will often stay with their mother and siblings throughout the

winter and not disperse until the spring. In this way, they can rely on each other to find food during the leaner months, and will nest together in groups for shared warmth. We can't be sure a young squirrel will be accepted into a community or family when released from rehabilitation, and they would not have enough time to store food or find shelter on their own if released in fall, so we keep all late-arrival young squirrels at the clinic until enough natural foods have emerged and temperatures are warm, ensuring they are independent when they return to the wild.



Other common winter clinic residents are reptiles and amphibians. These animals don't store food or need warm nests since they hibernate all winter, but if they are sick or injured, they won't survive the hibernation process. Box turtles with injured shells are a good example—hibernation would cause their metabolism to slow down to the point that they wouldn't be able to heal their wounds or fight off an infection. To keep injured turtles healthy we have to keep them at almost summer-like temperatures, provide sun lamps to mimic longer daylight hours, and make sure they have an enriched diet throughout the winter.

So while the clinic slows down, the building is far from empty. And our work of caring for these patients continues too. ✂



thank you, Claire!

AT THE END OF DECEMBER, the Schuylkill Center said goodbye and thanked Claire Morgan, who retired at the end of the year. One of our longest serving employees, Claire was hired in 2001 to work on community programming, and became a fixture here for the next 18 years, serving as educator, volunteer coordinator, bookstore manager, community gardens coordinator, and more. “She just might have worn more hats than anyone in the Schuylkill Center’s storied history,” Executive director Mike Weilbacher offered, “which is saying a lot.”

A 10th-generation Roxborough resident, Claire, who grew up in the Wissahickon section, has been living with her husband



CLAIRE MORGAN, THE RETIRED VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR, TESTS OUT HER NEW BENCH WITH THE TEAM THAT CREATED IT, FROM LEFT, SHAWN RILEY, STEVE GOIN, AND SAM WHITTAKER.

Ralph in Andorra for almost 40 years now, raising their two sons there. Education is in their blood, as she is the daughter of a schoolteacher who taught at Dobson, Shawmont, and Cook-Wissahickon schools. Claire herself has a Master’s in Elementary Education from Temple, and taught science in the Green Woods Charter School when it was based here.

But she’s best known for her 12 years as our Volunteer Coordinator. In 2019, Claire helped 1,400 people spend more than 10,000 hours volunteering here. She has run the successful Toad Detour program for much of that time, manages the Senior Environment Corps where retirees engage in stream monitoring, sets up high school students with service projects, runs our butterfly counts, and so much more.

“It’s been amazing and a joy,” reflected Claire, “and I’ve learned so much in my time here. I enjoy working with high school kids, love working with the seniors, and everything in between. There was a college student here volunteering for Halloween Hikes this year, and she turned out to be a student I taught in first grade at Green Woods. That’s so great.”

What’s next for Claire? “To see as many national parks as possible,” she answered. “And I’ll probably volunteer somewhere too.”

Of course. Thank you, Claire, for 18 great years here. Come try out her new bench. ✂

GOING HOME CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

My heart raced right along with them, welling with the pride of a volunteer who had helped feed and care for them since their arrival at the clinic as orphaned babies. Today was release day! And for this volunteer, it was the ultimate honor. I was living the mission of the Schuylkill Center’s Wildlife Clinic to care for sick, injured or orphaned wildlife and return healthy animals to their natural habitat.

While that proud mama bear moment under the oak tree might have been mine alone, it really represented the collective success of a whole team of clinic staff, volunteers, friends and supporters.

Under the expert leadership of Director Rebecca Michelin, the Wildlife Clinic cared for several hundred furred and feathered creatures this year. From opossums to owls, goslings to goldfinches, robins to red-tailed hawks, cottontails to catbirds, one magnificent great blue heron, and LOTS of orphaned baby squirrels, we all worked together to return them to the wild life they were meant to live.

The three squirrels began their journey with staff and volunteers syringe-feeding them warm formula every few hours, and

cleaning and weighing them daily to chart their progress. As they grew over the next several weeks, they moved to a larger cage indoors, and were gradually weaned off the formula and introduced to solid foods. At long last, they “graduated” to a large outdoor enclosure where they would learn all the squirrely behaviors, like climbing and foraging, they’d need to survive on their own.

As I watched them bound off into the woods, I paused for a moment of thankful reflection on our shared success story. Congratulations to the clinic’s professional staff – Director Rebecca Michelin, Chris Strub and Liz Ellmann. A high-five to my fellow volunteers who spend hours on the endless feeding and cleaning parade, growing these babies big and strong.

Perhaps most importantly, thanks to our donors and friends whose generous support makes all this possible. Without your generosity, the clinic wouldn’t have the medical equipment and supplies it needs to humanely care for sick and injured animals in a clean and healthy facility. And it’s amazing how quickly a team of wildlife rehabilitators and volunteers can go through a fully-stocked refrigerator, freezer and pantry at the height of baby season! ✂

the season in brief

HIGHLIGHTS FROM FALL 2019

1 Advisory Board Funds the New Front Entrance

In 2019, our Advisory Board of past presidents created a special campaign to raise the funds needed to give our Center's front entrance a makeover; a grant from the Widener Foundation helped improve the entrance's accessibility. The group celebrated the project's completion with our staff on November 8. Here, Director of Development Casey Darnely (far left) and Executive Director Mike Weilbacher (far right) thank Advisory Board members (from left) Harry Weiss, Julie Spahr, Binney Meigs, Charlie Dilks, and John Affleck.

3 Town Meeting on People and Urban Wildlife

Rebecca Michelin, director of the Schuylkill Center's Wildlife Clinic, and Grid magazine's "Urban Naturalist" columnist Bernard Brown, along with the Aark's Leah Stallings, answered questions about navigating and improving the complex relationship between people and urban wildlife.

2 Henry Meigs Environmental Leadership Award

Executive Director Mike Weilbacher (far left) and former trustee Binney Meigs (far right) present the 14th annual Henry Meigs Environmental Leadership Award to Leah Stallings (left), director of the Aark Wildlife Rehabilitation and Education Center in Chalfont, and her mother, Mary Jane Stretch, the Aark's founder. Binney is the son of Henry Meigs, one of the Center's founders.

4 Volunteer Engineers Help Rebuild Ravine Loop Bridge

On November 12, employees of HDR, Inc., an engineering firm that happily specializes in bridges, visited the Center to help us with the much-needed project of repairing a damaged bridge on our Ravine Loop. The firm's foundation also supplied funds to assist with the project's materials. We owe a deep thanks to HDR, Inc.





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WINTER 2019/20

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support 

THE SCHUYLKILL CENTER

Give today to help us connect people
and nature, restore the land, and foster
future environmental stewards



SEASONAL FAMILY FUN

february 1

winterfest for wildlife

FEBRUARY 1, 2020 @ NOON-4:00 PM

enjoy a day of wildlife-themed fun: winter
wildlife hikes, animal face-painting, crafts,
talks on urban wildlife & behind-the-scenes
tours of the wildlife clinic

