

quill

FROM THE SCHUYLKILL CENTER FOR ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION | SPRING 2022



FLEDGLING HOUSE FINCH ENJOYING THE OUTDOOR AVIARY

Our Wildlife Clinic turns 35

By Amy Krauss, Director of Communications

WE DO A LOT OF WONDERFUL THINGS

HERE like teaching thousands of adults and children about the environment, stewarding hundreds of acres of habitat, and exploring and engaging with environmental issues through art. But one of the most unusual things we do here is save animals—lots of animals.

Annually, we see over 2,000 injured, orphaned, and sick animals. Through the generosity of private donors committed to this cause, our team of wildlife rehabilitators rescues, diagnoses, administers medical treatment to, and rehabilitates native species with the singular goal of returning healthy animals to their natural habitats in the wild.

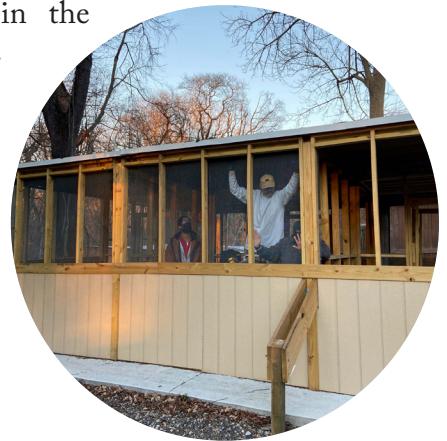
In the last decade, the building and its outside enclosures have received a radical makeover. “One of our aspirational goals is to become a world-class rehabilitation facility,” says Executive Director Mike Weilbacher. “We are certainly on that path.”

For starters, we’ve reconfigured our indoor space to increase efficiencies and workflow to better care for the patients. Fulfilling a long-time goal, we’ll soon have an x-ray machine which

will dramatically increase the accuracy and decrease the time of our diagnostic capabilities. Our centralized exam room now has an intensive care area complete with emergency medical supplies for triage. We designed a bird room with specialized incubators and heat and humidity controls and have a dedicated aquatics and reptile room. And for patients suspected of contagious illnesses, or are particularly sensitive, we have a designated isolation ward.

On our back deck, we built a tailor-made aviary giving us a space for raising fledgling birds. We can now separate birds by size and species. Not only is it easy to maintain, it’s a huge time-saver given how frequently these youngsters need to eat. And best of all, it offers them more space to explore, exercise, and prepare for a life in the wild.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6



OUR TEAM PUTTING THE FINISHING TOUCHES ON THE NEW SQUIRREL ENCLOSURE

director's cut

UKRAINE AS A “FOSSIL FUEL WAR”

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Christopher McGill
President

Erin Mooney
Vice President

Keith Kowalski
Vice President

Gregg Mohrmann
Treasurer

Mary Ann Boyer
Secretary

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Jane Bradley Alavi, MD

Jan Albaum

Jenn Asplundh

Lisa Auerbach

Dina Bleckman

Joanne Dahme

Leah Douglas

Jerry Fagliano, MD

Neil Feinstein

Stephen J. Kaufman

Tom Kehoe

Deenah Loeb

Ted Mucellin

Gail Scott

Staci Vernick

EDITOR

Amy Krauss

DESIGNER

Katelynne Cooper

SVITLANA KRAKOVSKA HAS A UNIQUE LENS TO

VIEW THE WAR IN UKRAINE. A Kyiv resident, she's also Ukraine's leading climate scientist and helped draft the latest report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), a UN effort that has meticulously cataloged the climate catastrophe—and was released just as Russian bombs fell.

As climate writer Bill McKibben reported in The Guardian, Krakovska finished the report while sheltering in her basement, bombs exploding nearby. “I started to think,” she told McKibben, “about the parallels between climate change and this war, and it’s clear that the roots of both of these threats are found in fossil fuels. Burning oil, gas, and coal is causing warming and impacts we need to adapt to. And Russia sells these resources and uses the money to buy weapons. This is a fossil fuel war. It’s clear we cannot continue to live this way.”

“Both the invasion and IPCC report,” wrote McKibben, “crystallized for Krakovska the human, economic, and geopolitical catastrophe of fossil fuels. About half of the world’s population is now acutely vulnerable to disasters stemming from the burning of fossil fuels, the IPCC report found, while

Russia’s military might is underpinned by wealth garnered from the country’s vast oil and gas reserves.



“But it is the conflict in Ukraine,” he continued, “that has caused governments to hastily attempt to untangle themselves from a reliance on Russian oil and gas. The European Union, which gets about 40% of its gas supply from Russia, is working on a plan to rapidly upscale renewable energy, bolster energy

efficiency measures and build liquified natural gas terminals to receive gas from other countries.”

With a barrel of oil going now for over \$100, oil and gas production will ramp up as companies respond to inflated prices, ironically when we need to leave carbon behind. No less than Tesla founder Elon Musk offered that “we need to increase oil and gas output immediately. Extraordinary times demand extraordinary measures.”

Or do we? Perhaps the extraordinary measure we need to take now is rapidly decarbonizing to not only protect the planet and create green-energy jobs, but de-fund petro-dictators like Putin. As Jamal Raad, executive director of Evergreen Action, told McKibben, “the best way to weaken Putin’s grip on the global energy market is to get America off of fossil fuels.”

Meanwhile, in Kyiv, Krakovska told McKibben she will stay in her home city even as the Russian army advances, declining offers to work elsewhere. “I know that’s what Putin wants, for us to flee Ukraine so they can have our beautiful country,” she said. She’s refusing to give in.

“Caring about the people of Ukraine,” McKibben concluded, “means caring about an end to oil and gas.” Agreed.

All the best,

Mike Weilbacher, Executive Director
mike@schuylkillcenter.org
@SCEEMike on Twitter

thursday night L!VE

FREE, ONLINE PROGRAMS ARE BACK

WE CONTINUE OUR SERIES OF FREE, ONLINE EVENTS WITH A SPRING LINEUP featuring leading experts from across the region and nation. Programs are one hour and start at 7pm. Register to receive the event links. Donations appreciated. 

MARCH 31: RESTORING THE RED KNOT

Each May, thousands of red knots, a small migratory sandpiper, land on Delaware Bay beaches. But in recent decades, knot populations have plummeted from the overharvesting of horseshoe crabs; the crabs' eggs are the source of energy for red knots to finish their trip. Knot expert, Dr. Lawrence Niles, will untangle these bird's astonishing story as part of this delicate ecosystem.



APRIL 7: SNAKE, TURTLES AND TOADS, OH MY!

Snakes, salamanders, frogs, toads, and turtles are all around you, even in Philly's most urbanized areas. Local naturalist, Billy Brown, shares how these surprisingly common animals live, how to find them, and how to be a good neighbor.



APRIL 14: CYCLING WITH BUTTERFLIES

Pedaling over 10,000 miles from Mexico to Canada, author, educator, and adventurer Sara Dykman spent nine months on her bicycle following the monarch's migration route. She joins us to share her adventures and the monarch's epic story.



APRIL 21: EARTH DAY LIVE

The tradition continues as we celebrate Earth Day featuring special guests, music, poetry, and a countdown of the top 10 environmental movies of all time. Don't miss our Youth Poet Laureate sharing a specially-commissioned Earth Day poem, and more.



APRIL 28: RESTORATION ROUNDTABLE

So many environmental groups are working to restore our forests, meadows and wetlands, but climate change, invasive nonnatives, and those darn deer, not to mention new threats like lantern flies, conspire to undo all this hard, necessary work. What do we do? Join our region's top restoration specialists in a lively conversation about this critical issue.



CREDIT: PETER DESTEPHANO

THE SCHUYLKILL CENTER FOR ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

8480 HAGY'S MILL ROAD, PHILADELPHIA, PA 19128

schuylkillcenter.org | 215-482-7300

naturalist notebook

SPRING BABIES

By Chris Strub, Director of Wildlife Rehabilitation and
Rebecca Michelin, Wildlife Rehabilitation Consultant

AT OUR WILDLIFE CLINIC, THE QUESTION, “I’VE FOUND A BABY _____. WHAT SHOULD I DO WITH IT?” is one of the most challenging questions we field on our hotline. During spring and summer, well-intentioned people call us about injured and orphaned baby birds and mammals.



NESTLING AMERICAN ROBIN

It's normal to see some species without their parents at certain times of day especially once they reach a particular point in their development. To the human eye, they may appear to be too 'young' to be on their own. If you think a baby animal needs help, check our website for the most common scenarios or reach out to us by phone (215-482-7300 x 2).

By far, our most frequent calls are about baby birds. In a majority of songbird species, such as robins, cardinals, and sparrows, babies leave the nest before they are able to fly or fully care for themselves. Mom and Dad visit them periodically to feed or lead them to safer locations, but are not with them all the time. You'll observe they're mostly feathered, can stand or hop, and can perch on a

branch or ledge. They may appear clumsy when they first leave the nest, only able to flutter along the ground or hop short distances; this is a normal and important part of development. Mom and Dad watch and guide their offspring from afar, spending less time with them as they become more independent.

Humans often pick up these avian fledglings (teenagers). They're easy to catch and are often not afraid. This is an unnecessary intervention and can lead to stress for both parents and offspring. Save yourself a trip to the Clinic by not helping fledglings. We will most likely request you return them to where you found them.

Birds make up the majority of our successful reunions, so we always want to give them their best chance. If in doubt, call us and our expert rehabbers can assess the situation and provide solutions for you. If you do reach out and receive a voicemail message, please be patient; spring is our busiest season, and we want to make sure every baby gets the best care possible. ✋



FLEDGLING CARDINAL



artist spotlight

NATURE'S COMPANIONS

By Tina Plokarz, Director of Environmental Art

OUR ENVIRONMENTAL ART PROGRAM EMBRACES NATURE'S RESTORATIVE AND HEALING POWERS as part of our "Year of Restoration." Our upcoming exhibition, *Companions – mas masarap magkasama*, will feature a series of interactive prints and a site-specific installation by Filipino-American artists Maria Dumlaao along with Nicky Uy and Omar Buenaventura of the collaborative Bahay215. The exhibition will explore how we, as individuals and a community, define ourselves at home. The emerging vegetation, species and spiritual creatures in Dumlaao's prints—activated by viewers holding transparent colored filters in red, green, and blue—tell stories of a sense of belonging, colonization, and migration between the Philippines and North America.

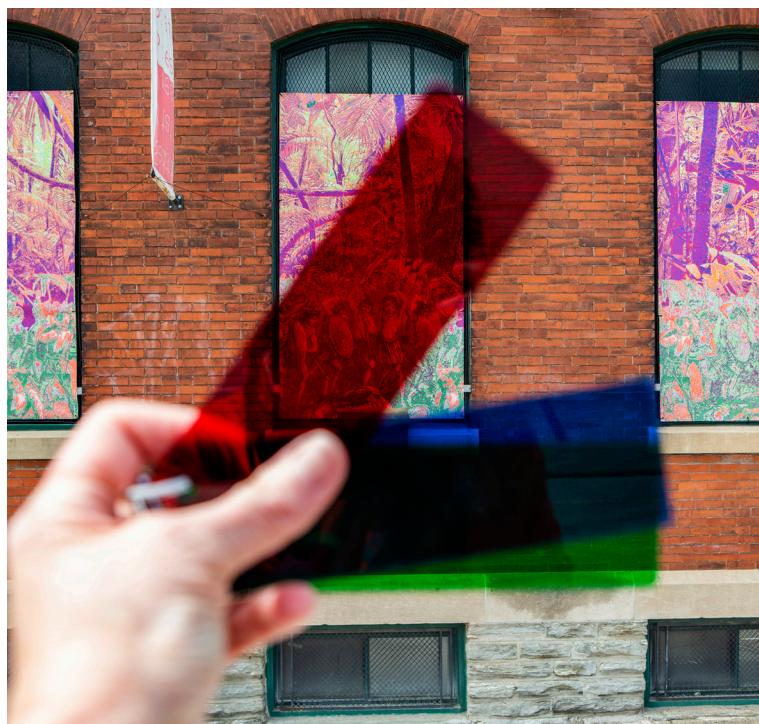
Inside the gallery, natural and metaphorical ingredients from botany to commerce will be assembled into colorful prints. Invasive knotweed in familiar landscapes, processed pork meat on pineapples, and buzzing honey bees will set the stage for a dialogue about the cultivation of plants, food culture and native people in foreign lands. Outdoors at our Visitor Center, two of Dumlaao's large-scale prints will be accompanied by a bamboo structure that is loosely inspired by a *bahay kubo*, a stilt house original to the farmed fields of the Philippines. A visitor is invited to hold up colored filter panels and view the Center's changing habitat with different lenses.

Blending art, ecology and food culture, this exhibition is an exploration into our human desire for belonging in foreign lands. As we're protecting and adapting our environment to today's changing climates by cultivating new flora and fauna, *Companions* is an invitation to open our eyes to the delicious fascination of nature and perceive culture through the diversity and migratory paths of food. 

Join us on Saturday, April 16 at 2 pm for an opening celebration and a taste of Filipino culture in Philadelphia. Look for summer programming for the whole family around food culture and storytelling.



MARIA DUMLAAO, FIRST FRIDAY INTERACTIVE WORKSHOP, ASIAN ARTS INITIATIVE, PHILADELPHIA, PA 2018.



MARIA DUMLAAO, INSTALLATION VIEW WITH PULL-OUT COLOR-FILTERS, IN: ARCHIVES REIMAGINED, PHILADELPHIA PHOTO ARTS CENTER, PHILADELPHIA, PA, 2021. © PHOTO ARTS PHOTOS COURTESY OF PPAC

our wildlife clinic turns 35

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

Squirrels, our most frequent patients, have a brand-new, next-generation enclosure. Custom-designed, each section contains a tree for climbing and a squirrel-specific nest box. With a double layer of metal mesh to keep them safe from outside predators and to prevent them from escaping before they're ready, we can now accommodate the hundreds of squirrels we take in annually. These enclosures can also do double-duty for opossums and other small mammals.

Chris Strub, Director of Wildlife Rehabilitation, readily admits that "these individual improvements may seem small, but collectively they enable us to accept more patients with a wider range of injuries. With each upgrade, we see a dramatic increase in our ability to treat a more diverse population."

The negative impact of the pandemic over the past two years has been significant as we had to curtail our influx of on-site volunteers from 40-60 weekly to less than ten. "Volunteers are essential to the daily functions of the wildlife clinic," notes Assistant Director Liz Ellman. "They are our rock stars and do anything from preparing food, cleaning enclosures, doing dishes and laundry, to answering our 24-hour hotline."

Liz is rebuilding our volunteer program with introductory online sessions followed by in-person training. "Regardless of

one's area of interest, previous experience level, or current skill set," Liz says, "there may be a place for someone committed to saving wild animals. And in anticipation of our busy 'baby' season, having an extra set of hands saves these animals."

One of our most recent puzzling patients was a flashy, red-shouldered hawk who arrived after a suspected vehicle collision. Despite being in overall good condition, he refused to eat on his own. Given that raptors generally do not recognize pre-killed prey, we tried every trick in the book. After nearly two weeks, we managed to entice him to eat a delicately chopped mouse. We're happy to report he was successfully released in Delaware.

The clinic is one of the Schuylkill Center's core programs and has made enormous strides in its 35-year history. Trustee Erin Mooney chairs the board's Clinic committee and is delighted that "every improvement we've made helps strengthen our role as the go-to resource for wildlife rehabilitation. And we're incredibly proud of our leadership and expertise." 

If you're 16+ years-old and interested in volunteering at the Wildlife Clinic, please email volunteer@schuylkillcenter.org or complete our online form.



Save the date

On Friday, May 20, come celebrate the Center's Year of Restoration focused on re-establishing our sense of balance in our relationships with nature and each other. Join fellow nature-lovers for a party under the stars to support the Schuylkill Center and pay tribute to former board presidents, Kathleen Wagner and Charles "Chip" Lee III.

We're having live jazz, locally-sourced food and drink, and a tour of the Center's art gallery by local Filipino-American artists.

All proceeds support our mission to connect people with nature, protect our 340 acres of green space, and rehabbing injured/orphaned wildlife.



season in brief

HIGHLIGHTS OF WINTER 2021/22

1 Throughout the year, our **volunteers** saved over 2,000 toads, warmly greeted visitors, folded hundreds of maps, planted native plants in our Courtyard garden and new front garden, incorporated hundreds of new trees, spent countless hours tending the property, saved hundreds of patients at our Wildlife Clinic, and so much more. Thank you!



2 Makeba Rainey led us through her exhibition, LESS IS MORE at an opening reception. Here she created a reflective and sacred space for the nourishing of the Black community in Philadelphia.



3 We welcomed 60 “makers” to our family **wreath-making** session in December sourcing natural materials from our forest floor.



4 Students in our entirely outdoor classroom, Sassafras, eagerly watched a new shelter go up. A grant from The GIANT Company and Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful's Healing the Planet program made this upgrade possible.



5 Even during frigid temperatures, almost 500 people attended **Winterfest for Wildlife** in support of our Clinic. We celebrated with wildlife-themed crafts, nature hikes, vendors, and more.

6 We piloted a **bilingual, after-school program** with a grant from the Alliance for Watershed Education. Educator Eduardo Duenas taught complex climate topics and sustainable solutions to 4th and 5th graders at Kirkbride Elementary.



The Schuylkill
Center | *for* ENVIRONMENTAL
EDUCATION

8480 HAGY'S MILL ROAD,
PHILADELPHIA, PA 19128
schuylkillcenter.org | 215-482-7300
RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
UPPER DARBY, PA
PERMIT #45

quill
FALL 2021

in this issue:

CLINIC TURNS 35, PAGE 1

ONLINE PROGRAMS, PAGE 3

NATURALIST NOTEBOOK, PAGE 4

ARTIST SPOTLIGHT, PAGE 5

SEASON IN IMAGES, PAGE 7

supporting

THE SCHUYLKILL CENTER

scan this QR code to make a
gift and join a community of
like-minded people who connect
with nature and the outdoors



**NATUREPALOOZA:
A FAMILY EARTH DAY CELEBRATION
SATURDAY, APRIL 23 | 10–2 | FREE**

