

# Charlestown Township Summer Newsletter

Published by the Board of Supervisors

11 General Warren Blvd. Suite 1, Malvern, PA 19355 (610) 240-0326

Township Hours: 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. Monday - Friday

[www.charlestown.pa.us](http://www.charlestown.pa.us)

Meetings are held at the Township office, 11 General Warren Blvd. Suite 1, Malvern, PA



## BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

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## MONTHLY MEETINGS:

### Supervisors

1<sup>ST</sup> Monday @ 7:00 p.m.

### Environmental

#### Advisory Committee

2<sup>ND</sup> Monday @ 7:00 p.m.

### Planning Commission

2<sup>ND</sup> Tuesday @ 7:00 p.m.

### Historical Commission

3<sup>RD</sup> Wednesday @ 1 pm  
Jan-Mar-May-Jul-Sep-Nov

### Parks & Recreation Board

3<sup>RD</sup> Thursday @ 7:00 p.m.

### Zoning Hearing Board

Scheduled on as-needed basis

A vibrant event poster for Charlestown Day 2024. The background is a mix of orange, red, and green with a bokeh effect. At the top, there's a small green triangle with a red maple leaf. The text "Charlestown" is written in a large, elegant, teal cursive font. Below it, "DAY 2024" is in a bold, teal sans-serif font. The location "Charlestown Park - 100 Academic Way, Phoenixville, PA" is in a smaller teal font. The date "SATURDAY 28 SEPTEMBER" is prominently displayed in large, bold, teal letters, with "11AM-3PM" below it. To the right of the time, the word "featuring" is written in a cursive script. Below the date, there are three columns of activities: "KIDS ACTIVITIES", "FOOD TRUCKS", "VENDORS", "LIVE MUSIC", and "BOUNCE HOUSE &amp; MORE". At the bottom, there's a call to action: "FOLLOW CHARLSTOWN PARKS &amp; RECREATION ON FACEBOOK FOR EVENT DETAILS, UPDATES, &amp; CANCELLATION ANNOUNCEMENTS" and "SPONSORS &amp; VENDORS WANTED!". Below this, it says "Contact Makinlee Fox (info@gofoxonline.com) for event vending &amp; sponsorship opportunities." At the very bottom, there's a dark green banner with "SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR SPONSORS:" and logos for "GO FOX ADVENTURES" and "GoFox".



# Pennsylvania Native Species Day, May 16, 2024

- by Carol Armstrong, Chair, Environmental Advisory Committee

Charlestown participated again this May in Native Species Day with a children's art contest and activities at Brightside Farm Park, supported by the Environmental Advisory Committee. Our special goal this year, in addition to the art contest, was to provide information to residents and others walking the trails about common but noxious invasive plant species that take up space and resources in our yards and properties. While Landscaping Contractor RES focused on removing invasive plants from Brightside itself, we focused on residents' questions: we provided information sheets with photos to identify the noxious invasive species that are able to spread, often unnoticed until they have taken over a yard, park, or forest. The information sheets were made by the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and included management methods. You can find their complete listing at: <https://www.dcnr.pa.gov/Conservation/WildPlants/InvasivePlants/InvasivePlantFactSheets/Pages/default.aspx>



A big thank you goes to the Penn State Univ. Ext. Master Watershed Stewards, Sarah Newman of West Pikeland and Nicola Clarke (depicted in photo) of Malvern, who spoke with visitors to explain the principles of the critical roles of native species in our natural ecosystems, and the problems created by non-native and noxious species.

The Children's Art submissions were again extraordinary this year. The EAC is always surprised and impressed by the high interest of our children in native species, and by their attention to notable features of species. They were invited to draw a native species from any group; 61 submissions came from K through 5<sup>th</sup> grades at



Charlestown Elementary School. A first place winner from each grade was given a bird nesting box, and a second place winner from each grade was given a hummingbird feeder. Each box was made by Dan Walker of the EAC as shown at right. Also pictured: EAC members Jill Green and Carol Armstrong.



*At left in the Children's Art Contest:*

*Special Mention:  
5<sup>th</sup> grade sculpture – Natalie*

*Ruby-throated hummingbird*

Congratulations to our Winners and to Everyone Who Participated in our Art Contest!

# Winners of Charlestown's 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Native Species Art Contest

## Charlestown Elementary School:

### Kindergarten:

1<sup>st</sup> place - Liliana  
"Coneflower", Viceroy,  
Northern Metalmark



2<sup>nd</sup> place - Joy; White-tailed deer



### First Grade:

1<sup>st</sup> place - Julian;  
Cardinal flowers & White-tailed deer



2<sup>nd</sup> place - Juliett;  
Red spotted purple butterfly



### Second Grade:

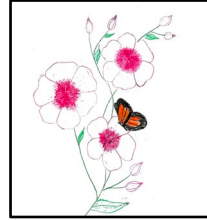
1<sup>st</sup> place - Elijah; Eastern white pine,  
Bald Eagle, Northern cardinal,  
Mallard, Aster



2<sup>nd</sup> place - Rebecca;  
Eastern Cottontail

### Third Grade:

1<sup>st</sup> place - Chloe; Phlox and Monarch butterfly



2<sup>nd</sup> place - Leo; Five-lined Skink



### Fourth Grade:

1<sup>st</sup> place - Cara; White-tailed doe



2<sup>nd</sup> place - Juliet; Dense Blazing Star,  
Northern red oak, White wood aster, False sunflower



### Fifth Grade

1<sup>st</sup> place - Meghan; White-tailed deer,  
Turtle, Prairie rose, Veronica Longifolia



2<sup>nd</sup> place - Emerson; Black-Eyed Susan







## CAN WE STOP WASTING GOOD FOOD?

- by Patti Lynn, Recycling Resources Manager, CCSWA

Summer is a great season for picnics, barbecues, and celebrations – enjoying foods like cold salads, watermelon, grilled meats. If you are Trash Smart, you know that we can all do better with how we manage uneaten food.

A 2021 waste composition study at Lanchester Landfill demonstrated that 15% of the trash was food waste, and most of that was characterized as edible. Although food does decompose, it also creates methane, a greenhouse gas that contributes to climate change.

Some Chester County residents have a compost bin in their yard, mixing yard waste with food scraps. Some folks pay a composting company to collect their food scraps curbside. While Chester County works on trying to minimize food waste disposal, with limited composting options, there are some behaviors you can change while you plan meals, food shop, cook, and clean the plates. Be Trash Smart; pledge to adopt even one action:

- Scan your kitchen, and plan meals with those ingredients before buying more perishable food.
- Use leftovers in an upcoming meal. An uneaten baked potato can be tomorrow's home fries.
- Mix bruised fruit with yogurt in a blender for a nutritious beverage.
- Create a weekly meal plan and stick to it. Just planning out 3-5 days and shopping for *those* fresh ingredients is a great start to reduce food waste.
- Check out the "Guest-imator" at [www.savethefood.com](http://www.savethefood.com) to help you plan meals for special events.
- Date labels on foods are especially confusing, and most have little to do with food *safety*. Only baby formula has a legal mandate for a date label. An app such as FoodKeeper helps the public understand storage of food for freshness and *quality* ([www.foodsafety.gov](http://www.foodsafety.gov)).



- Improve cooking skills to reduce undercooked and overcooked meals.
- Freeze leftover foods in anticipated portions. Date them for better quality use.
- Support your local farmers' markets.
- Donate only **USABLE, WANTED** food to food pantries.
- Learn to compost! Find composting resources at [www.chestercounty.org](http://www.chestercounty.org).
- Take home leftovers when eating out or ask for smaller portions.

## ***Kestrel Banding at Brightside Farm Park***

- by Andy Motel



On Wednesday, June 5, 2024, at 4:00 p.m., Dan Mummert, a diversity biologist with the Pennsylvania Game Commission, placed leg bands on Kestrels chicks nesting at Brightside Farm Park while the nervous parents watched from the sky. Four of the five eggs had hatched by May 26<sup>th</sup>. This unique event was open to the public and approximately 60 enthusiastic visitors attended. This was an exceptional opportunity to learn about the Kestrel, North America's smallest falcon, and observe these raptors firsthand and in their preferred grassland habitat. The event was followed with a photography bird walk with members of the Audubon Society at 6:00 p.m.



### ***Wanted! Older photos of Swiss Pines from the 1980's and Earlier***

***As part of our research into the history of Swiss Pines, we're very interested in compiling scans of high resolution, older photos that can be added to the Township's records.***

***If you believe you have any pictures that may be suitable, please contact the Township Office at 610-240-0326 or email [admin1@charlestown.pa.us](mailto:admin1@charlestown.pa.us). We'll make arrangements to borrow and return your materials.***



# Nest Box Update

## Year One: Trial, Errors, Successes and the Lessons Learned

- by Pete Goodman with Andy Motel

With the able assistance of Mike Allen and Dan Walker, the authors began work on a project to benefit two bird species: the American Kestrel and the Barn Owl. The idea grew out of contact with Dan Mummert of the Game Commission. Since 2021, Dan has visited Charlestown annually to place leg bands on Kestrel nestlings at Brightside Park. As a diversity biologist, Dan uses his position to advocate for wildlife by educating the public about our local ecosystems. Through Dan, we learned about the severe decline in



Kestrel and Barn owl populations over recent decades.<sup>1</sup>

The plight of these birds coupled with the success of the nest box at Brightside served as the inspiration to undertake a greater effort to help these birds. At some point we decided we were the Nest Box Subcommittee of Charlestown Bird Town!

We asked large landowners across the township if they would host a nest box. After a gratifying response, Dan Mummert visited to look at potential sites and approved all but one. The Subcommittee was rolling. Andy drafted Pete and Mike to use their carpentry skills to build boxes and they cheerfully agreed to do so. From November through the end of March, the Subcommittee convened on weekends to put up boxes. A utility pole in an open field was an easy choice for one kestrel box, and a Barn owl box is now inside a barn accessible from the outside but everywhere else, muscle, and group effort was essential.

Using a posthole digger, we dug holes 4' deep. We mounted the much larger (and heavier) Barn Owl boxes on 16' 6x6 posts and used 16' 4x4 posts for each Kestrel box. One day there was snow, and the ground was frozen. That is dedication! In the end we exceeded our 10-box goal by putting up 10 kestrel and 5 Barn owl boxes.<sup>2</sup> We then began monitoring and logging activity in each of the boxes.

With scant experience, we benefited from mentors as well as trial and error. So, what happened this season with the 15 nest boxes? First, Barn owl numbers have declined to the point that they are rarely seen in Chester County. Dan Mummert knew of one active nest box in Chester County this spring.

So, we were not surprised our 5 boxes went unoccupied. Barn owls need time to discover the boxes and while there's no way to know when one may appear, Charlestown possesses areas of perfect Barn owl habitat, and we have boxes in those locations ready for occupants. As for the Kestrel boxes, we exceeded our expectations. In Box 1 at Brightside, 4 of the 5 Kestrel eggs hatched, and when he banded the nestlings on June 6, Dan Mummert found three males and a female, all healthy. Kestrels are cavity dwelling birds (think woodpecker hole) and do not add nest material, so we placed 2"-3" wood shavings in each box. At Box 6, the Kestrel female laid 5 eggs but by the time the Kestrels occupied the box, Starlings had removed all the nest material which we saw in many other boxes as well.

During a later visit to #6 we found 1 egg smashed and another cracked. Soon after the Kestrels abandoned the 3 remaining eggs and Tree Swallows moved in. At Box 5, the Kestrel female laid 5 eggs and all 5 hatched. Hopefully, all 5 fledged successfully and are doing well. At Box 10, after repeatedly removing Starling nests and replenishing the wood shavings, the Starlings finally moved on, and Kestrels moved in. The female laid 4 eggs and all hatched. In the remaining 6 boxes, Starlings nested in 2, Tree Swallows in 3, and Blue Birds in 1. Not bad for the first year.

In response to the article about the nest box program in the spring newsletter, we received many requests to host a nest box. We have 15 boxes now in, and just 5 more to install, two for Barn owls, 3 for Kestrels. We won't put up more boxes than we can regularly visit and monitor. As efficient as we became this year, it took two days to visit all 15 boxes so we know 20 will be more than enough work for us. Our success is not measured only by the number of boxes the Subcommittee puts up and monitors. The objective of this program was always to help birds by educating and encouraging residents throughout Charlestown to put up their own nest boxes, for owls, Kestrels or any other birds. Your property may not be suitable for a kestrel or Barn owl, but there's a nest box for every property.<sup>3</sup> We hope we responded to everyone who expressed an interest in the program with useful tips and suggestions. There are many ways to support birds on your property throughout the year.<sup>4</sup>

Please look for updates on our efforts here and on the township website. If you have questions, email Andy Motel at [amotel@andrewmotellaw.com](mailto:amotel@andrewmotellaw.com) or Pete Goodman at [peteg5020@gmail.com](mailto:peteg5020@gmail.com)

<sup>1</sup> See: *America's Smallest Falcon Is Getting Smaller*, by Chambliss, All About Birds, Spring 2019, <https://www.allaboutbirds.org/news/living-bird-spring-2019-table-of-contents/> and *The Climate Report*, <https://climate2014.audubon.org/birds/brnowl/barn-owl/> Development is a factor in their decline, but Kestrels and Barn owl are also casualties of needlessly harmful land management practices by landowners, municipalities and also homeowners, but that's a different article.

<sup>2</sup> We also put up one wood duck box that was a success.

<sup>3</sup> Go to <https://nestwatch.org/learn/all-about-birdhouses/right-bird-right-house/>

<sup>4</sup> For practical guidance on helping birds go to <https://birdtownpa.org/>

# Preliminary Master Plan Work Underway for Swiss Pines

- by Linda Csete

At the June 3<sup>rd</sup> Board of Supervisors meeting, the Supervisors accepted the proposal presented by Tom Comitta for a Preliminary Master Plan for Swiss Pines, which outlined the following scope of services:

1. Communications: Following the Board's appointment of a working group, assisting the Group in reaching out to other knowledgeable persons, the residents on the property, and others familiar with the former Gardens and/or Llewellen Mansion.
2. Inventory & Analysis: Gathering of various data including topographic, hydrologic, woodland resources, historical and cultural, vehicular and pedestrian circulation, and utilities/infrastructure.
3. Visioning and Preliminary Recommendations: Recommendations would utilize Best Management Practices to address programming, management and maintenance alternatives, enhancement ideas for vehicular ingress and egress, ideas for rehabilitation of the Gardens and other grounds improvements, and funding options.

The process will take approximately six – eight months, with a presentation to the Supervisors in early 2025. The 17 acres of the original Japanese gardens still has remnants including sculptures, lanterns, bridges, statues, and plantings. Many remnants remain that could be repurposed. These included a kiosk, entrance hut, lanterns, and possibly reinstatement of some spiral stone raked areas.



Stand of Trees at Swiss Pines – photo by George Csete

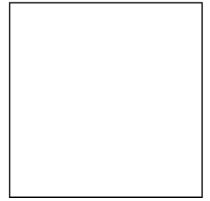
An additional 204 acres surrounds the original Garden. There are multiple conservation easements on the various parcels that will need to be reviewed and possibly revised.

In July, the working group was appointed. Members include Cordelia Kane from the Parks & Recreation Board, Dan Walker representing the Planning Commission and EAC, and Supervisors Kuhn and Philips. For the 17 acre Gardens, HARB members Rosemary Philips or Nancy Long, architect Carol Quigley, engineer Dan Wright, and staff planner Mike Allen will also be consulted.

## **Please note:**

**For safety and security reasons, Swiss Pines remains closed to the Public at this time.**

**Charlestown Township**  
**11 General Warren Blvd. Suite 1**  
**Malvern, PA 19355**



## **Smart 911 – Free to Sign Up: Seconds Save Lives!**

Smart 911 is a **completely secure and private website** that lets you create a secure profile for your family, including any information you want 9-1-1 to have during an emergency. You can include details such as a list of family members and any special needs, photos, medical notes, pets and emergency contacts.

**You control and customize the information** you want 9-1-1 and first responders to have in an emergency situation. The safety profile enables faster and more effective emergency response by law enforcement, fire and emergency medical services. It helps the 9-1-1 call takers know exact locations and what assistance is needed, often at a time when the person calling 9-1-1 may not be able to communicate those details.

The information is seen only when the resident dials 9-1-1 and it is automatically displayed to the 9-1-1 call taker, allowing him or her to send the right response team to the right location with the right information. The information then disappears after 1 hour, this way **no information is stored** to be given out at a later time.

With Smart911, county residents can **link both home and work addresses to mobile phones**, which can be passed on to responders in the field for a more detailed, rapid response. Additional information, including pets in the home, vehicle details in the event of an accident, and emergency contacts can all be included in the safety profile

Once a Smart911 profile is created, it can appear **in any 9-1-1 center throughout the nation** that uses the system. So if a resident of Chester County is involved in an emergency situation in another municipality that uses Smart911, the safety profile information will appear on the 9-1-1 call taker's screen when the emergency call is made. **Go to: <https://www.smart911.com/> to sign up now!**