



Hunterdon Land Trust

Protecting the places you love

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Hunterdon Land Trust's Latest Preservation Effort Will Let Everyone Enjoy Sweet Sounds of Nature

KINGWOOD -- When Chester Podpora invited friends from Philadelphia to spend the night in his Kingwood home, the city dwellers looked forward to a quiet night in the country. Instead, they quickly discovered how alive with animal life Podpora's woods can get.

"They said 'How do you sleep with all that noise?' " he says with a laugh. Then, standing among the trees in his woods, he looks up and listens. "I said 'That's not noise. That's music."

Podpora has been hearing this beautiful music for more than 40 years now – the croaking of American Bullfrogs in the creek, the drumming of Hairy Woodpeckers on tree trunks, the sweet twittering of Rose-breasted Grosbeaks from branches high above. Now, because the Hunterdon Land Trust has preserved this roughly seven-acre property, everyone can enjoy this symphony of nature.

Located off County Route 519, the property attracted the interest of the Land Trust because it's near several recently preserved properties and the Lockatong Creek flows directly through it.

"It's an important piece in the puzzle for preserving the Lockatong," said Kate Buttolph, former Land Acquisition and Stewardship Director of the Hunterdon Land Trust who oversaw this preservation. Efforts to protect this property, and others like it, also serve to forward the goals of the National Park Service's Lower Delaware Wild & Scenic Program which aims to protect the remarkable natural, historic, and recreational resources that earned this stretch of the river the Wild and Scenic designation.

Land Trust Executive Director Patricia Ruby noted the many benefits this property offers.

“Preserving this property not only protects the water quality in the Locketong Creek but also ensures public access to a number of recreational opportunities,” Ruby said. “The property is home to a significant diversity of bird species as well as amphibians for excellent wildlife viewing on site, and many will enjoy the fishing in this stretch of stream.”

Podpora and his neighbor Alfie Grillo can attest to the variety of birds spotted on the land: Blue Herons, Great Horned Owls, Red-bellied and Pileated woodpeckers, Scarlet Tanagers and Baltimore Orioles. They denote the passage of time by remarking on the year they saw a wood duck or when red-tail hawks nested nearby.

“This morning we heard somebody chirping away; we think it was the mating call. Sounded like a machine gun going off,” Podpora said. “The bird population here is phenomenal.”

Land Steward Tom Thorsen predicts this preserve could become the Land Trust’s most visited thanks to the wildlife and because the creek is good for trout fishing. He hopes to begin clearing debris and marking trails late this summer.

The Land Trust paid \$16,000 for the property, with the money coming through Green Acres funding. Podpora says he’s thrilled everyone will one day enjoy this property, which will be known as the Locketong Recreation Area.

“I wanted to see this land preserved because I enjoy nature and walking out in the woods,” he said. “You come here and listen to the birds and watch the insects and animals walking around. If you’re quiet enough you might see a raccoon walk by, muskrats in the creek, maybe some turtles – it’s a nice getaway. How can you not enjoy something like that?”

Caption information: Kingwood Twp. resident Chester Podpora (with glasses) points out several features of his 7-acre property off County Route 519 that was recently preserved by the Hunterdon Land Trust. The creek behind him is the Locketong.

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