



LEEFrog



The Newsletter of the
Lutherlyn Environmental Education Program

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Accipiter Action by Todd Garcia-Bish

Walking along the narrow strip of evergreens along our driveway, we regularly find a circle of songbird feathers - no bones, no blood, just feathers. We had some likely suspects – stray cat, fox, owl, maybe a hawk. However, recently we watched the predator make the circle of feathers before it flew off with the body of a mourning dove. It was our local Cooper's Hawk.

Cooper's Hawks (*Accipiter cooperii*) and their look-alike cousins, Sharp-shinned Hawks (*Accipiter striatus*), prefer to hunt in forests. They are well-adapted for these habitats and use their long, narrow tails for the quick maneuvering it takes to fly through tree branches in pursuit of their prey. Songbirds are the chief prey of both hawk species, with Sharp-shinned Hawks taking birds robin-size and smaller and Cooper's Hawks usually taking birds that are robin-size and larger. Both species will also dine on small mammals and rodents.

Flying through trees is dangerous, though. According to a study cited by Cornell's Lab of Ornithology, 23% of Cooper's Hawks studied had evidence of fractures in the bones of their chest.

Sharp-shinned Hawks and Cooper's Hawks are notoriously hard to distinguish from each other. These two species, along with the Northern Goshawk, make up a group of hawks called Accipiters. These are hawks with short wings, small heads, and long tails, especially when compared to buteos or soaring hawks, like our Red-tailed, Red-shouldered, and Broad-winged hawks. Generally, Sharp-shinned Hawks are smaller (10-14" long) with smaller heads and shorter necks. Cooper's Hawks tend to be larger (14-20" long) with a slightly more rounded tail.



Cooper's Hawk

Sexual dimorphism makes distinguishing these hawks more difficult. Females are sometimes a third larger

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Notes from the Naturalists by Erica Miller

The **Spotted Lanternfly** (SLF), an invasive species that has spread extensively across Pennsylvania since 2014, has been spotted here at Lutherlyn. Two individual insects were seen on separate occasions this summer at camp. No further SLF were seen until October 16th, when a small number were located on the wild grapevines behind Dogwood pavilion. For now, fortunately, the population appears to be small and is feeding on a plant that is both abundant and unlikely to be significantly harmed by its presence. We have reported our sighting and will be closely monitoring the area for signs of the insects and their egg masses so that they can be promptly destroyed. For more information, please go to: <https://extension.psu.edu/spotted-lanternfly>.



This summer, the garden at Terra Dei was also visited by an interesting pest – the **Tobacco Hornworm**. The Tobacco Hornworm, much like

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Accipiter Action (continued from page 1)



than males. So, a female Sharp-shinned can be very similar in size to a male Cooper's Hawk.

The long-term outlook for these two species is not as similar as their appearance. These hawks are difficult to count, so the best census numbers come during migration. According to counts done at Hawk Mountain, PA, the Cooper's Hawk numbers are increasing nicely each year. The number of Sharp-shinned Hawks, however, is trending downward. Studies need to be done to determine why this is, but forest habitat destruction is assumed to be a major contributor, especially in their Central American wintering habitat.

Whether Cooper's or Sharp-shinned, these hawks are fascinating to watch. We were blessed several years ago to have a family of Cooper's Hawks nest above Lutherlyn's Octagon picnic shelter during our spring field trip season. It was amazing to watch these birds dive and swoop through the forest in search of prey. Invite them to your backyard by feeding songbirds. It won't take long for the predators to arrive.

Program Highlight: Vernal Pool Workshop and Solar Eclipse Retreat

We are very excited to offer two special adult programs this spring. **Life in a Vernal Pool** will be offered March 9th from 10:00 a.m. - 2:30 p.m. One month later, we will be offering a three-day retreat, April 6th-8th, culminating with the **solar eclipse**.



Award-winning naturalist, April Claus, will join us in March for an in-depth examination of the ecology of Pennsylvania's vernal ponds. Vernal ponds (or ephemeral pools) are shallow areas that fill with rain or snow melt in the spring and dry up in the summer. These ponds create a unique habitat, especially for some types of amphibians. This program will introduce participants to these unique breeding pools and showcase the behaviors of some of our most endearing amphibian species. Participants will learn how to identify amphibian egg masses and meet some live specimens of native salamanders, toads, and frogs

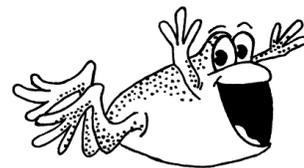
who utilize these fleeting spring ponds. The first portion of the workshop will be held indoors. After lunch, the group will visit a nearby vernal pond to make observations in the field. For more information about this program, please visit www.lutherlyn.com/leespsp.

On April 8th, we have the rare opportunity to view a total solar eclipse from the United States. The next opportunity won't be until 2044. This retreat will include lots of fun environmental education programming at Lutherlyn and some eclipse-specific modules, too. There will be plenty of time for hiking and relaxing. The evenings will include opportunities for night hikes and constellation viewing (weather permitting). The climax of the retreat will be a trip to Erie to view the eclipse on Monday afternoon. For more information, please visit www.lutherlyn.com/eclipse.



Register now for summer camp
at Lutherlyn!

www.lutherlyn.com/summer



Share this newsletter with a friend!



Weed Eating at Terra Dei Homestead by Erica Miller

Weeds truly can be the bane of a gardener's existence, especially when they are as fast-growing and hardy as galinsoga (*Galinsoga parviflora*) – also known as quickweed and gallant soldier. This invasive weed was introduced from Central America and is now present across much of North America. Galinsoga can grow up to 30 inches tall, and has opposite toothed leaves and tiny white flowers with yellow centers. It has quite shallow roots and can be easily pulled by hand, which is fortunate because to control the weed it needs to be pulled early and often. While it may be tempting to add this weed to your garden compost pile, resist the urge! By the time you see those tiny flower heads the seeds are already nearly mature, which is why it can take several years of diligent and constant removal to effectively reduce the population.



In Colombia, galinsoga is called guascas and is a very popular and commonly used aromatic herb. The stems and leaves can be eaten raw, cooked, or dried, and have a mild earthy flavor that is somewhat reminiscent of an artichoke. Well-loved Colombian recipes that commonly include guascas are empanadas, tamales, marinades, and a delicious traditional soup called ajiaco.

Ajiaco is a potato, chicken, and corn soup that is seasoned with the guascas, giving it a very distinctive flavor. If, like me, you would like to try your hand at “weed-eating,” see the recipe for ajiaco on our blog “The Nature of Lutherlyn” (www.lutherlynnature.blogspot.com). Dried guascas is also a great substitute and can be purchased online, and the papa criolla (tiny yellow potatoes native to the Andes valley in South America) can be found frozen at many Latin markets.

Welcome Erica! In September, LEEP welcomed a new Assistant Director. Erica Miller comes to us with a degree in environmental science from Southern New Hampshire University and a background in healthcare.



Earthcare Corner: Fast Fashion by Erica Miller

Putting on that new pair of jeans that fit perfectly – for many there is nothing quite like it. The way we dress shapes how others perceive us, plays an important role in our mental and emotional well-being, and is tied closely to our personal identities. For something that plays such a large and important role in our daily lives, many people do not know much about where their fashion comes from or how it impacts our environment. In the last few decades, the “fast



fashion” industry has steadily grown, rapidly creating mass quantities of inexpensive clothing in response to ever-changing fashion trends.

According to Earthday.org, the fast fashion industry is tied to incredible amounts of waste and environmental degradation. Over 100 billion garments a year are produced, with approximately 87% of these ultimately ending up in landfills. The industry has grown so large that it is now responsible for 4%

of global greenhouse gas emissions (as much as the U.K., Germany, and France combined), and its waste products such as chemicals and heavy metals pollute watersheds.

Thankfully, there is much we can do as consumers to advocate for more sustainable fashion. Choosing quality over quantity and purchasing clothing made from recycled materials are all great options. Additionally, supporting local businesses such as Branded in Butler (brandedinbutler.com, a vintage clothing store) can help keep quality vintage clothing out of landfills.

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LEEF Public Programs: Saturday Safaris



Lutherlyn Saturday Safaris are a great way to spend part of a Saturday! They are designed for groups and families of all sizes and shapes. Safaris are \$10.00 per person and all of the programs involve outdoor adventures! Please check LEEP's website (www.lutherlyn.com/EE) or contact the LEEP office for more information.

- **February 3, 2024** - Introduction to Birdwatching, 9:30-12:00
- **March 2, 2024** - Maple Sugaring, 9:30-12:00
- **September 7, 2024** - Gardening and Energy Efficient Living, 9:30-12:00
- **November 2, 2024** - Survival Skills, 9:30-12:00

Notes from the Naturalists (cont'd from page 1)

the biologically similar Tomato Hornworm, feeds on plants in the nightshade family such as tomatoes, eggplant, potatoes, and peppers. They can be identified by diagonal stripes and a red horn, while the Tomato Hornworm has V-shaped chevrons and a blue-black horn.

These pests can quickly do a startling amount of damage, so management includes daily



visual monitoring (beginning in early July) of your nightshades for signs of defoliation and frass (small, black, lumpy droppings often found on the ground under the plant). Crop rotation and simple manual removal of any larvae (they are quite large!) is typically sufficient for control in smaller gardens, but it is important to leave behind any larvae that are covered by white cocoons – a sign that it has been parasitized by its natural enemy the braconid wasp (*Cotesia congregatus*). Leaving these cocoons to hatch means more beneficial biocontrol of this pest in the future.



You Are Invited:
CampBlast



Saturday, May 11, 2024

Join us for a day of FUN that highlights all that Lutherlyn has to offer.

The best part.... **EVERYTHING IS FREE!**