

1-2014

External Recognition of the Ecological Value of the Gordon Natural Area

Gerard Hertel

West Chester University, ghertel@wcupa.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.wcupa.edu/gna_sp_series



Part of the [Forest Management Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Hertel, G. (2014). External Recognition of the Ecological Value of the Gordon Natural Area. Retrieved from http://digitalcommons.wcupa.edu/gna_sp_series/48

This Report is brought to you for free and open access by the Gordon Natural Area History & Strategic Plan at Digital Commons @ West Chester University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Gordon Natural Area History & Strategic Plan Documents by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ West Chester University. For more information, please contact wccessler@wcupa.edu.

External Recognition of the Ecological Value of the Gordon Natural Area

January 2014

Background. As highlighted by our annual celebration (WCU GordonFest 2012 & 2013) and the special poster session at the 2013 WCU Research Day (dedicated to research in the Gordon Natural Area (GNA)), the value of the GNA is greatly recognized and appreciated by members of the WCU community. This was culminated in December when Dr Weisenstein added a 12 acre parcel to the GNA. What might not be as evident is the considerable recognition the GNA has received at the local, regional, and national levels. These sources of external recognition of the value of the GNA serve as testament to the importance of this ecological gem well beyond the borders of our campus.

2005 Regional Transportation Feasibility and Design Study (West Chester Regional Planning Commission, Final Report) - The GNA was found to possess important natural and cultural values. The report states

In all, the GNA serves to support an excellent example of a once typical Piedmont forested habitat, and so could serve to represent a "reference condition" or a model for that increasingly rare type of habitat. In all, the GNA is a local reservoir and refuge for many forms of biodiversity that are no longer supported by the prevailing landscape.

2005 West Chester Bird Club - Conducted a study of the avian diversity of the GNA and helped document 52 bird species, of which three are considered "area sensitive." These three species are able to breed only in large tracts of undisturbed habitat, such as the GNA, and are strong indicators of ecological integrity.

2006 National Wildlife Federation - Certified the GNA as official Wildlife Habitat because of its ability to provide the basic needs for numerous native wildlife species.

2007 Professional botanists conducted an intensive survey of the flora of the GNA - Jack Holt and Janet Ebert helped to identify 506 plant species, including several that are of special concern. They found seven state-listed species:

***Ginseng** (State Rank: Vulnerable), first encountered in the 1980's, is still present in some numbers. **Nodding Trillium** (State Rank: Undetermined), **Late Bluegrass** (State Rank: Endangered) **Elliott's beardgrass** (State Rank: Rare), **Crane fly orchid** (State Rank: Rare), **Davis' sedge** (State Rank: Watchlist), and the sedge **Carex conjuncta** (State Rank: Watchlist) were new discoveries. Trillium was observed at several locations in the Big Woods both north and south of Stadium Road and appears to be fairly widespread, although present in low numbers. The other four species were only observed at single locations*

or as only one or two individuals. These findings led to our designation as a Wild Plant Sanctuary in 2013

2011 University of Delaware selected the GNA as a release site for a biological control agent (weevil) against the invasive mile-a-minute vine.

2012 Dr. Ann Hoover, Deputy Director of Forest Health for the USDA Forest Service in Washington - After an on-site inspection of the GNA, she commended our use of "best management practices" in dealing with invasive plant species.

2010-13 Brandywine Valley Association - The oldest watershed conservation organization in the USA designated a tributary in the GNA as the most healthy branch of the entire Plum Run watershed. They donated \$1000 worth of trees to us in 2013.

2010-13 East Goshen, East Bradford and West Chester Borough - These municipalities have all sought out the GNA staff for technical assistance. (East Goshen Forest Restoration Project; Shaws Bridge Riparian Buffer Restoration Project; Emerald Ash Borer Management Plan)

2006-13 GNA has received grants from DCNR (\$20K); USDA Forest Service (\$10K); Tree Vitalize (\$8K); Invasive Species Council (\$5)

2013 Michael Rains, Director of the USDA Forest Service Northern Research Station (NRS) - Funded a request by researchers using the GNA to establish a long-term formal relationship between the NRS and WCU entitled "Healthy Forest Fragments, Healthy People, Healthy Communities." Projects supported by this funding (\$10,000 for the first year) have started fieldwork as of 5/31/2013.

2013 Commonwealth of Pennsylvania - After an intensive on-site inspection by the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, the GNA has been officially designated a DCNR Wild Plant Sanctuary. This recognition was presented to President Weisenstein at GordonFest 2013 on November 13.

2013 Chester County Department of Open Space Preservation - GNA qualified to be officially added to the Chester County map of preserved open space (wetlands ; floodplain; old farm field) and will show up on the 2014 official maps as green space!

2013 Brandywine Conservancy - Will consider portions of the GNA to include segments of their Regional Greenway trail system. West Goshen and East Bradford promoting this idea

|