



News for Immediate Release

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South Mountain Speaker Series to Feature Four Lectures in 2013

February Event Focused on Spring Pools that Host Amphibians

Harrisburg – The fourth season of an innovative series of speakers will begin Thursday, Feb. 28, at Messiah College with a talk on a unique feature that dots the landscape in the South Mountain region: seasonal wetlands, known as vernal pools.

Additional topics in 2013 will include South Mountain rhyolite, native pollinators and conservation law.

"The South Mountain Speaker Series has been a great outreach tool to involve the community in protecting and enhancing the South Mountain landscape in central Pennsylvania, with more than 1,300 people attending the lectures," said Allen Dieterich-Ward, associate professor of history at Shippensburg University and the chair of the committee on the speaker series. "For our fourth season, we'll continue with four events on a range of issues meant to engage citizens in conserving the South Mountain region's natural landscapes by exploring lessons from our past."

February's discussion, entitled "Conserving Woodland Vernal Pools on South Mountain," begins at 6:30 p.m., with light refreshments, followed at 7 p.m. by the lecture at Kline Science Center, Room 120, at Messiah College. It is free and open to the public.

Vernal pools provide vital habitat to a wide variety of species including amphibians, insects and crustaceans, as well as the birds and mammals that feed on them. The region features a large number of these pools, including a number at Kings Gap Environmental Education Center and seven that were restored at the Nature Conservancy's Forest Pools Preserve adjacent to Kings Gap.

The lecture will be given by Messiah College biologists Erik Lindquist and David Foster. They will explore the identification and conservation of seasonal wetlands around South Mountain. Betsy Leppo, invertebrate zoologist with the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, will join them for a panel discussion following the lecture.

This is the fourth year for the South Mountain Speakers Series, envisioned as a revival of the talks given by Joseph Rothrock in the late 19th century as part of his work to preserve and restore Pennsylvania's forests and natural landscape.

This lecture is sponsored by Messiah College, The Nature Conservancy, Appalachian Trail Conservancy, Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and the South Mountain Partnership.

The three additional lectures this year will include:

- "South Mountain Rhyolite: Geology and Archaeology," April 10 at Penn State Mont Alto;
- "Bee Well: Native Pollinators and the Working Landscapes of South Mountain," Sept. 12 at Wilson College; and
- "Crimes Against Nature: Conservation Law and the History of Wildlife Protection in the South Mountain Region," Oct. 24 at Shippensburg University.

The South Mountain Partnership is a group of citizens, businesses, non-profit organizations and government representatives in Adams, Cumberland, Franklin and York counties, working together to protect and enhance the landscape.

The partnership was sparked by DCNR's Conservation Landscape Initiative, an effort to engage communities, local partners and state agencies and identify funding opportunities to conserve the high-quality natural and cultural resources while enhancing the region's economic viability.

South Mountain is at the northern end of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Communities in the 400,000-acre region have thrived off fertile limestone agricultural lands, the timber that fed iron furnaces, plentiful game and wildlife, and abundant pure spring water that is captured by the mountains' permeable soils and released into the valleys.

For more information about the speaker series, visit <http://southmountainspeakers.blogspot.com/> or call the Appalachian Trail Conservancy at 717-258-5771.

Some of the earlier lectures in the speaker series can now be found on YouTube at <http://www.youtube.com/user/SouthMtnSpeakers>.

Media contact: Christina Novak, 717-772-9101

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