



Become a Member and Receive:

- 20% program discount
- 10% discount in the Nature Shop
- Early registration for summer camps
- Invitations to members-only events
- Discounted/free admission to select nature centers across the nation
- And more!



Newsletter and Calendar

www.briarbush.org

215-887-6603

September - December 2026

Nature Center Hours

Business Hours

Monday - Friday: 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM

Dede Long Nature Museum

Daily: 10:00 AM - 4:00 PM

Griscom Bird Observatory

Daily: 10:00 AM - 4:00 PM

Briar Bush Pond

Daily: 10:00 AM - 4:00 PM

Pollinator Garden

Daily: Dawn to Dusk

Trails

Daily: Dawn to Dusk

Admission: Donations accepted.

Admission fees are subject to change.

Facility and trail access may change due to weather or scheduled events.

Call before your visit for current Briar Bush hours.

Visiting with a group of six or more? Please call in advance for accommodations.

Calendar of Events - Page 4

The Dede Long Nature Museum, Griscom Bird Observatory, and Briar Bush Pond will be CLOSED Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, and Christmas Day. Trails are always OPEN from dawn to dusk.

www.briarbush.org

Why Briar Bush Leaves Downed Trees? *The Case for "Coarse Woody Debris"*

By Director, Mark Fallon

It might look messy to some, but in terms of a natural ecosystem, a fallen tree is often as full of life as a growing one. In southeastern Pennsylvania, where our forests face heavy pressure from development, invasive species, and other impacts, leaving downed wood, technically known as Coarse Woody Debris (CWD), is one of the most cost-effective ways to boost ecosystem health. Read on to discover why we leave so much wood on the forest floor!

1. Habitat for Specialist Wildlife

Many of Pennsylvania's most iconic and sensitive species depend entirely on dead wood.

- Southeastern PA is home to the **Red-backed/Lead-backed Salamander**. These amphibians require the moist, cool microclimate found under rotting logs to breathe through their skin and lay eggs. Briar Bush is home to hundreds, maybe even thousands of these specialized amphibians, which likely cannot survive even in next-door backyards that lack CWD.



By Alex Karasoulous

- While standing dead trees (snags) provide homes for Screech owls, woodpeckers, and other cavity nesting birds, downed logs provide cover for **foxes, box turtles, chipmunks, and snakes**.
- Many native **solitary bees** tunnel into soft, decaying wood to overwinter or nest. These important pollinators cannot survive without CWD.

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Briar Bush News and Information



2. Nutrient Cycling and Soil Health

You can think of a downed tree as a slow-release vitamin pill for the surrounding soil.

- As fungi and bacteria break down the wood, they return essential nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium to the soil.
- Decaying logs act as hubs for beneficial fungi that connect to the roots of living trees, helping them trade nutrients and survive droughts.

3. Erosion Control and Water Retention

Our region has seen increasingly intense rain events.

- On the sloped terrain at Briar Bush, logs act as natural check-dams. They catch organic matter and slow down runoff, allowing water to soak into the aquifer rather than eroding topsoil.
- Rotting wood acts like a giant sponge, holding vast amounts of water that keep the surrounding soil moist during July and August dry spells.

4. Carbon Sequestration

When a tree is removed or burned, its stored carbon is released relatively quickly. When it stays on the forest floor, a significant portion of that carbon is incorporated into the soil profile through fungal activity and burial, keeping it out of the atmosphere for decades or even centuries.



Comparison: Managed vs. Natural Landscapes

Feature	"Cleaned" Forest Floor	Natural (CWD) Forest Floor
Biodiversity	Low; limited to generalist species	High; supports fungi, moss, insects, birds, amphibians, and reptiles
Soil Moisture	Dries out quickly	Stays damp; high drought resilience
Erosion Risk	High	Low; logs act as barriers



Volunteer at Briar Bush Nature Center

Briar Bush could not accomplish its goals without the help of dedicated volunteers. Learn more about the variety of opportunities and make your mark at BBNC.

Board of Director: The Friends of Briar Bush is seeking Board of Director candidates with backgrounds in community leadership, business, finance, non-profit management, and education.

Interested? Email volunteer@briarbush.org with Board Service in the Subject Line.

Check our website for more opportunities for families, teens, and groups!

Did you know?

You can support the nature programs you love at Briar Bush tax-free! If you have an IRA, a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) lets you donate some or all of your Required Minimum Distribution directly to us. It's a wonderful win-win: you lower your taxable income, and your gift goes straight to work supporting our mission.

Chat with your financial advisor to see how easy it is to make a difference!

Briar Bush News and Information

Welcome New Board Members



Jeff Bates

Jeff Bates was born and raised in Colorado, where he developed his love of nature by camping and hiking in the Rocky Mountains. He moved east to Pittsburgh for college, earning a BA in horn performance at Carnegie-Mellon University, and then further east to the Philadelphia area, where he attended law school at Villanova Law School, earning his JD in 1989.

Jeff practiced law in Philadelphia for over 36 years, both in a general practice, and for the last 30 years of his career, as a litigator. During that time he was also involved in the Abington community, where he served on the Board of School Directors for 14 years, serving as vice-president for eight of those fourteen years.

Jeff and his wife, Joanne, and their three kids moved to Abington in 1993, and discovered Briar Bush shortly thereafter. They have spent countless hours at the Nature Center, enjoying all that it offers. Jeff has attempted to instill a love of nature in his kids, taking each on a short trek on the Appalachian Trail when they turned thirteen. Jeff was a beekeeper for several years, something he truly enjoyed, until his doctor told him he needed a new hobby due to his reactions to stings!

Jeff and his wife are recently retired and volunteering in the community. They look forward to continuing their love of nature through their grandchildren and other children in the community.



Kelly Durand

Kelly resides in Wyncote with her wife, where they have built their lives and raised two children, both recent college graduates.

Kelly first connected with Briar Bush when her children attended a birthday party, and she was immediately struck by the breadth of programs and services — summer camp included. Since then, her family has regularly enjoyed the nature trails and educational offerings.

Professionally, Kelly serves at HopePHL, where she oversees compliance and performance management for housing programs, staff training, and Information Technology Services. She brings 20 years of nonprofit experience driven by a deep commitment to social justice, and is known for her solutions-based approach to bridging the needs of constituents with the realities of funding constraints.

Kelly's love for the outdoors, animals, and nature was sparked in childhood during long walks through the woods with her grandfather — her curiosity keeping pace with every step. She returns to those roots today as a proud new member of the Briar Bush Board of Directors.

Outside of work, Kelly enjoys time with family, exploring the outdoors, traveling, and watching sports.

Programs for Children

*Most programs require registration for participants ages 2+. Children under 2 years of age are free of charge.
Please review all program information at the time of registration.*

To register visit www.briarbush.org. Questions or need help registering? Call 215-887-6603.

Magic Mornings

Hey, toddlers! Bring your favorite adult to join a Briar Bush educator for walks, animal encounters, activities, and more. Each week features a new nature-themed lesson, which repeats throughout the week. Register for one day per week.

Ages: 2-5 year-olds with an adult

Days: MOST Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays

- First session is scheduled for September 29, 2026.
- Visit our registration site for the full schedule.

Time: 10:30am - 11:30am

Cost/Session: \$12.50 | Abington Resident: \$11.25 | BBNC Member: \$10.00

Add'l. Child (Same Household): \$7.50 | Abington Resident: \$6.75 | BBNC Member: \$6.00



Nature Pioneers

Children are invited to join us on their own for age-appropriate activities, walks, animal encounters, crafts, games, and more! Each week features a new nature-themed lesson.

Ages: 4-6-year-olds

Day: MOST Thursdays

- First session is scheduled for October 1, 2026.
- Visit our registration site for the full schedule.

Time: 1:00pm - 2:30pm

Cost/Session: \$15.00 | Abington Resident: \$13.50 | BBNC Member: \$12.00



School's Out, Get Outside!

When school is not in session, students can spend a day at Briar Bush exploring the outdoors, meeting live animals, crafting, playing in nature, and more!

Ages: Grades K-5

Day: Select Holidays and In-Service Days

- Schedule is based on the 2026-2027 School Year.
- Visit our registration site for the full schedule.

Time: 8:30am - 3:30pm

Cost/Session: \$90.00 | Abington Resident: \$81.00 | BBNC Member: \$72.00

After-Care is available from 3:30pm - 5:30pm after each session for \$12.00 per participant.



Programs for All Ages

Most programs require registration for participants ages 2+. Children under 2 years of age are free of charge.

Please review all program information at the time of registration.

To register visit www.briarbush.org. Questions or need help registering? Call 215-887-6603.

Family Nature Night - Animal Signs

A program for Children with Sensory Processing Differences and Their Families

Bring the whole family for a fun night complete with live animal encounters and interactive stations relating to the theme of the night - all at your own pace. Family Nature Nights are geared toward children with sensory processing differences and feature a forest sensory experience!

Date: Friday, September 18, 2026

Time: 6:00pm - 7:30pm

Cost: FREE (Sponsored by Child Development Foundation.)

Slugs, Spiders, and Sorcery - Campfire Program

Step into a world full of magical and marvelous creatures! Meet the animal ambassadors that are often misunderstood as spooky, slimy, or scary, and uncover some of the “magical” abilities that help them survive in the wild. After, we’ll venture out on a guided night hike to search for these creatures in their natural habitat and discover why they play an essential role in healthy ecosystems. Then, enjoy s’mores around the campfire. (Campfire is weather dependent.)

Date: Friday, October 23, 2026

Time: 7:00pm - 8:00pm

Cost: \$17.50 | Abington Resident: \$15.75 | BBNC Member: \$14.00

Outdoor Survival

What would you do if you found yourself lost in the woods? In this exciting, family-friendly take on our popular summer camp, you’ll discover the essential skills to stay safe and confident in the wild. Learn how to build a shelter, safely start a fire, and make smart choices about what you eat and drink—because not every berry or sparkling stream is as harmless as it looks. Adventure, knowledge, and wilderness wisdom await! (This program is recommended for participants ages 6+.)

Date: Saturday, November 7, 2026

Time: 2:00pm - 3:00pm

Cost: \$15.00 | Abington Resident: \$13.50 | BBNC Member: \$12.00

From Fall to Frost

As autumn fades and winter begins, the forest is full of subtle changes waiting to be discovered! Learn more about these seasonal changes during story time and a live animal encounter. Then take a hike on the trails in search of the last signs of fall, like lingering leaves and seed pods, while also spotting the first hints of winter, from bare branches to animal tracks.

Date: Saturday, December 12, 2026

Time: 10:30am - 11:30am

Cost: \$15.00 | Abington Resident: \$13.50 | BBNC Member: \$12.00

Programs for Adults

Most programs require registration.

Please review all program information at the time of registration.

To register visit www.briarbush.org. Questions or need help registering? Call 215-887-6603.

Garden Insects and Native Plant Swap

Uncover the hidden insect community living among your garden! When we take the time to look closely among the flowers, there are many fascinating creatures. Learn about these critters, then enhance your garden ecosystem through a native plant swap! Pot up a surplus native plant from your garden and take home a new species or two. (Bringing a plant is not required.)

Date: Saturday, September 12, 2026

Time: 10:30am - 11:30am

Cost: \$15.00 | Abington Resident: \$13.50 | BBNC Member: \$12.00

Field Trip: Bombay Hook National Wildlife Refuge

Consisting of 16,251 acres, Bombay Hook National Wildlife Refuge protects one of the largest remaining expanses of tidal salt marsh in the mid-Atlantic region. October prompts large numbers of snow geese as well as pintail, mallard, and black ducks as they begin their fall migration. Explore the Visitor Center and view diverse habitats during a 12-mile self-guided driving tour. Take breaks along the way to visit special points of interest for wildlife viewing and photography.

Date: Saturday, October 10, 2026

Time: 8:00am - 3:30pm (Participants will meet at Briar Bush to drive together in our van.)

Cost: \$45.00 | Abington Resident: \$40.50 | BBNC Member: \$36.00

The Fungus Among-Us

Fungi play a vital role in ecosystems around the world, supporting nature and people in countless ways. Join us to explore the fascinating importance of fungi and meet some of our mushroom-loving animal ambassadors as you journey into a deeper appreciation of the fungal world. Afterwards, we'll head out on the trails to discover how flora, fauna, and funga interact within Briar Bush's ecosystem.

Date: Saturday, November 14, 2026

Time: 10:30am - 12:00pm

Cost: \$15.00 | Abington Resident: \$13.50 | BBNC Member: \$12.00

Winter Wreath Workshop

Create a unique wreath to brighten your home! We'll provide a wreath base, fresh evergreens, an assortment of foraged materials, and everything else you need to bring your creation to life. To ensure that beneficial native plants remain undisturbed, all foraged items will be gathered from invasive plant species. Whether you're an experienced crafter or a first time wreath-maker, you'll leave with a beautiful seasonal decoration and a deeper appreciation for conservation through creativity.

Date: Saturday, December 5, 2026

Time: 10:30am - 11:30am

Cost: \$17.50 | Abington Resident: \$15.75 | BBNC Member: \$14.00

Briar Bush Special Events

Briar Bush Member's Annual Appreciation Event

Friends of Briar Bush Members

All Friends of Briar Bush Members are invited to the annual business meeting and program. Learn more about the work of *your* organization and enjoy a members only program.

Day: Thursday, November 19, 2026

Time: 6:30pm - 8:00pm

Cost: FREE (Registration is required to ensure enough materials and food for all.)

*More details about the Annual Meeting and more
Friends of Briar Bush Member's Programs coming soon!*



WinterFest 2027 - Save the Date!

Celebrate the magic of the winter season at our annual WinterFest! Learn about the history of maple sugaring, observe tree tapping demonstrations, and enjoy a variety of winter activities including guided hikes, live animal encounters, winter scavenger hunt, winter tree crafts, and more.

Theme: Trees in Winter

Date: Sunday, January 24, 2027

Time: 1:00pm - 4:00pm

Cost: FREE - Registration is not Required



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THE GIVING ARM
OF BLBB ADVISORS

Sponsored by BLBB Charitable.



Friends of Briar Bush 36th Annual
Feather Our Nest Gala & Auction

Briar Bush in Bloom

Friday, September 25, 2026 from 6:30 pm - 10:00 pm

North Hills Country Club
99 Station Avenue, Glenside, PA 19038

Individual Ticket: \$150.00 | Pair of Tickets: \$275.00

*Dinner & Drinks * Live Auction * Games*

Online Auction begins September 11, 2026!

Funds raised during FON directly support Friends of Briar Bush mission and programs.

Scan to
Learn More!





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Looking Ahead to 2027!

Programs for All Ages

- ♦ Native PA Wildlife - Campfire Program
- ♦ Family Nature Night - Sponsored by CDF
- ♦ Creatures of the Night - Popsicle Program

Programs for Adults

- ♦ Legends After Dark
- ♦ Introduction to Animal Photography
- ♦ Field Trip - Bowman's Hill Wildflower Preserve

Save the Date for Briar Bush's 2027 EarthFest Celebration!
April 25, 2027 from 1pm-4pm. Sponsored by BLBB Charitable.

Looking for Summer Camp 2027 information?

Visit our website frequently or scan the QR code to join our mailing list for:

- ⇒ Summer Camp Program Offerings and Important Dates
- ⇒ Camp Scholarship Information and Application
- ⇒ Summer Camp Registration Tips
- ⇒ Camp Aide Information and Application

