

Practical Science Profiles: The Pennypack Ecological Restoration Trust

This week, we have the unique opportunity to discover a hidden gem: The Pennypack Ecological Restoration Trust.

PRACTICAL SCIENCE WITH PHIL FREDA

After pulling into the main entrance of the [Pennypack Ecological Restoration Trust](#), I thought that I stumbled into a dream.

I said to myself, “Wasn’t I just on Huntingdon Pike? How on Earth did I get here?”

A few quick turns of the wheel, and I had discovered a magical realm with pristine woodlands and prairie.

It seemed that civilization itself was far away.

After I got myself together, we were met by the executive director of the Trust, [David J. Robertson, Ph.D.](#) Dr. Robertson received his Ph.D. in biological sciences from the [University of Pittsburgh](#) in 1981 and has been employed by the trust since 1988. He is responsible for the overall administration of the preserve.

The Trust is operated by [nine employees](#), but garners the help of over 100 [volunteers](#) throughout the year. Approximately half of the Trust’s funding is provided by an endowment.

Dr. Robertson said that this money is just about enough to keep the doors open and the lights on. The other 50 percent of the necessary funds are provided by member and nonmember [donations](#).

Some 1,200 [members](#), some as far away as California and Oregon, provide a bulk of funds that allow the Trust to continue its operation.

Dr. Robertson agreed to give us a special tour of the trust and a look at its mission and history.

The Trust’s past and future:

The Trust was started in 1970 and was called the Pennypack Watershed Association at that time. Its prime mission was to improve water quality in the Pennypack Watershed area.

Its mission was a great success, with the [Pennypack creek](#) having the best water quality out of all of the other bodies of water in the area that run into the Delaware River.

In 1976, the Trust only encompassed some 26 acres of land. By 2010, when the Trust celebrated its 40th anniversary, the preserve has grown to over 800 acres.

As the Trust grew, so did its mission. Now, conservation, preservation and ecological restoration are the goals.

The Trust does this with [programs](#) that include native plant propagation, invasive plant removal, and control of its large deer population.

Why is conservation important?

So, why should Dr. Robertson and his team do what they do?

Protected lands give us a rare opportunity to experience nature as it was before human interaction.

The Trust is home to over 20 species of mammals, many species of birds, and even reptiles and amphibians.

It is a place where forest and grassland ecosystems can thrive.

What's in it for us?

The Trust offers a unique place for recreation. The open space offers visitors a place where they can kick back and enjoy the sights and sounds of nature.

The Trust has trails that allow visitors to hike, bike, run or walk. Multiple-use trails even allow pets and horses on them.

Trails are open to the public seven days a week from 8 a.m. to dusk.

How can I get involved?

One of the best ways to get involved is becoming a [member](#). One can achieve this by donating as little as \$35 per year! This money ensures the Trust's continued operation and expansion.

Also, just as important, the Trust can always use more [volunteers](#) that are willing to help with certain projects like [the removal of invasive plant species](#).

If you are not interested in becoming a member or volunteering and would still like to help, a one-time [donation](#) to the Trust is the route for you.

Still sitting on the fence? Just give it a shot!

Take the family, and head out to the Trust. Experience the true magic that lies there!

Think about it!

For the full story, please click on the **above video**.

Need info to contact the Trust?

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