

## Notes from the Woods

Last year was a good one for nature lovers, dog walkers, hikers, and birders here in East Amwell. New trails were constructed, new parcels were preserved, and existing natural areas were improved in various ways. Closest to town, the Clawson House is being converted to a useful community center, including displays of East Amwell history and Victorian era furnishings. The park's drainage has been improved and natural rain gardens added and improved. There are plans to repair the tennis courts.

In the northeast part of town, the Cider Mill Preserve now has a stone parking area from which there is a splendid view of the Sourland Ridge over the extensive grassland to the south. Across Cider Mill Rd. is the Van Doren farm, now in the agricultural preservation process. When you visit the Preserve please stay on the mowed paths along the hedgerows and keep your dog on lead so as not to disturb the grassland birds that nest there. Some winter over, like the little flocks of robins and bluebirds one can encounter here and there.

South of Cider Mill and Wertsville Rd. is the 400 acre Higgins tract being preserved by the New Jersey Conservation Foundation, which already preserved a large neighboring parcel to the east in Somerset County. They are currently working to preserve the 100 acre farm between the northern end of Higgins and Wertsville Rd. Public access to the area will be facilitated by NJCF. There are existing equestrian trails in Higgins operated by the Amwell Valley Trail Association.

On the other side of the mountain there are two new walking/hiking opportunities, Cedar Ridge West, added to the existing D&R Greenway Preserve fronting on Van Dyke Rd north of 518. The western extension fronts on Stony Brook Rd, where there is a new parking lot, trail head, and kiosk. Nearby, a volunteer crew organized by D&R constructed a new 1.2 mile trail on an NJDEP easement just west of Rambling Pines on 518. The Rocky Brook Trail follows a Stony Brook tributary north up to Snyderstown Rd. The trailhead is at a graveled pull-off just west of the Stony Brook bridge on 518. The trail includes six stream crossings that can be slippery in high water or winter - walking sticks advised. That crew is currently working on a trail addition in the Fiddler's Creek ravine just south of Bald Pate Mt. near the Delaware.

For detailed information on regional walking opportunities, and volunteer opportunities, check out [njtrails.org](http://njtrails.org).

Wishing you an enjoyable 2018, Toni Robbi