

NEWS RELEASE

From the Brodhead Watershed Association

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday, May 26, 2016

(Please do not print after June 25, 2016)

Photos available for download at:

<https://onedrive.live.com/redirect?resid=30B1025D165CAC5B!449&authkey=!AGNg43kRkh-MKsg&ithint=folder%2c>

Credit Nancy J. Hopping

Free hike at Blakeslee Natural Area: ‘Best loved’ space in county

Austin T. Blakeslee Natural Area, a 130-acre preserve, is a center of community life. Just off Route 115 and close to Blakeslee, Pa., and Route 80, it is an easy-to-reach haven for walking, fishing, picnicking, photography, and peaceful contemplation.

At 10 a.m. Saturday, June 25, Carol Hillestad will lead the next free hike in the Get Outdoors Poconos series here, where well-worn paths take you to the brink of the creek and you are likely to find people fishing, spring through fall.

Three blazed trails make for lots of hiking options. There’s a quick half-mile loop – Pine Trail – blazed in orange. Highland Trail, blazed in blue, is almost a mile long and loops through mixed hardwood and pine forest above the creek. The red-blazed Creek Trail is a 2.3-mile, out-and-back walk along the creek.

Then there is the highlight everyone aims for: the falls. Wide, flat bedrock above the falls has been worn smooth by decades of sightseers and fishermen. With good balance and a walking stick, you can make your way down to the deep pools below the falls and along the very edge of the creek. Or take the easier high route to an overlook above, in a clearing furnished with picnic tables and benches.

The walking would be mucky, but volunteers have placed bridges and simple stepping-stone crossings made of tree-trunk slices and smooth rocks – anything to welcome people to this outdoor wonder.

IF YOU GO: Free hike

What: Carol Hillestad will lead this moderate hike of about 2.5 miles.

When: 10 a.m. Saturday, June 25

Where: Meet at the lower trailhead off Route 115. Take Route 80 to Exit 284 – Route 115 North. After the Tobyhanna Creek bridge, parking area is immediately on left. Note: Two trailheads serve Austin T. Blakeslee Natural Area — the hike starts at the trailhead which is closer to Route 80. GPS coordinates 41° 4’ 59”N 75° 35’ 4” W, elevation 1,560 feet.

Cost: Free, but registration is required.

Information: Call 570-839-1120 or 570-629-2727; email info@brodheadwatershed.org. For information about this and other hikes in the free Get Outdoors Poconos series, go to brodheadwatershed.org/gopoconos. The hike series is administered by Brodhead Watershed Association and supported by a grant from the William Penn Foundation.