



Jonas Mountain Nature Preserve

‘Every trail sparks a story’

History preserved along with Jonas Mountain’s 417 acres

By Carol Hillestad

For Pocono Heritage Land Trust

Even in the midst of this summer’s long dry spell, Jonas Mountain Nature Preserve in Polk Township, Pa., is still flush with water. Springs, runs, and wetlands abound, all leading to the living heart of this place: Jonas Creek.

Linda Snyder, whose family once owned land here, has been hiking these woods for years. Hundreds of houses now border the property, but 417 acres here are preserved in perpetuity, thanks to Linda, Pocono Heritage Land Trust and its supporters.

Heading uphill from the trailhead, the trail is wide and rocky, and provides access to a recently created power line. Pointing out the single-track trail that leads steeply up under the wires, Linda recommends the view from the summit. At more than 1,500 feet, five gaps are visible along the far ridge: Delaware Water Gap, Wind Gap, Little Gap, Smith Gap and Lehigh Gap.

But that’s a hike for another day. The goal right now is the creek.

Sweet fern and mountain laurel, tart blueberries and wineberries soon give way to the cool shade of the woods, dominated by chestnut oak mixed with other hardwoods. The trail here is wide and grassy — Linda credits work by her father and others who protected their homesteads by cutting these fire lines.

Soon, though, the easy footing ends. The trail heads steeply downhill, becoming rocky and eroded as the sound of rushing water grows. Straight ahead is what looks like a

Continued on reverse



Top: Pocono Heritage Land Trust worked with many dedicated friends of Jonas Mountain over the years it took to protect this land — none more dedicated than Linda Snyder.
Below left: Jonas Creek is characterized by many low stair-step falls that keep the cold water aerated.
Below right: The trail crosses under a power line, providing a long view toward Kittatinny Ridge.
(Carol Hillestad photos)



IF YOU GO

For information on visiting Pocono Heritage Land Trust’s 417-acre Jonas Mountain Nature Preserve — including a map of trails — see phlt.org under the tab Nature Preserves. The trailhead and kiosk are at 739 Rainbow Terrace in Polk Township.

Trails are being laid out and marked now, and vary from moderately easy to moderately difficult, with steep, rocky and wet areas. No facilities at the trailhead. Please pack out what you pack in. Leashed dogs of considerate owners are welcome. Coldwater springs here form the headwaters of Jonas Creek, a high-quality, coldwater Class A Trout stream that is a tributary of Pohopoco Creek and the Lehigh River.

Fishing and hunting permitted in season. Hikers should wear fluorescent orange.

Funding for the property came from the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, PPL Electric, Monroe County, Polk Township — and more members, friends and neighbors than any other PHLT project in more than 30 years of conserving land.

Jonas Mountain Nature Preserve is a beloved natural retreat for generations of people in Monroe County’s West End, and it also preserves the land’s human history: long-ago winter hunting grounds for first people Lenni-Lenape; a hideout for Civil War objectors; and site of a pine-tar kiln, timbering operations.



Jonas Mountain Nature Preserve

Continuing from front

solid thicket of 20-foot rhododendrons. A trail marker placed by Pocono Heritage Land Trust points to a narrow cut in the foliage.

Ducking through the opening, Linda leads the way to a simple footbridge. Filtered through the rhodies, the sunlight itself has a greenish cast. It's cool, and the air smells of damp moss. The rocky creek bed shows clearly in the crystal water, patterned with rippling green and gold reflections.

Once on the other side of the bridge, Linda bears off upstream, eager to reach some of the many wetlands and springs. Along the trail, she points out heavy rocks shifted by bears looking for insects and grubs.

Shallow, sandy-bottomed wetlands open up ahead in the forest. A toad's black-and-gold



Light filtering through rhododendrons creates patterns on the water of Jonas Creek. Rhododendron thickets like these help keep creeks cold, a requirement for the health of native trout. (Carol Hillestad photo)

eyes glitter. Birdsong enlivens the canopy overhead. The water shimmers, barely moving — yet always trending toward the creek among ferns and remains of spring wildflowers. A sense of connection, reverence and peace

also rises here.

There is much more to see, but it's getting past noon. Linda strikes out along the trail, as low, stair-step waterfalls stretch away upstream. The quickest way

back is through the creek, and Linda doesn't hesitate. Cool, wet feet feel pretty good on a warm summer day.

For Linda, in this green retreat, every view and trail sparks a story.

Back at the trailhead, Linda reflects on the human history of Jonas Mountain. Long-ago winter hunting grounds for first people Lenni-Lenape. Hideout for Civil War objectors. Site of a pine-tar kiln, timbering operations — and beloved natural retreat for generations of people in Monroe County's West End.

Amid continuing development, this rich, intact forest provides pure water, clean air, healthy habitat for birds, amphibians, mammals, and other creatures — and fills a very human need for time in nature. Come see for yourself!



**POCONO HERITAGE
LAND TRUST**

ABOUT CONSERVING LAND

Founded in 1984, Pocono Heritage Land Trust is a nonprofit organization dedicated to protecting the natural and cultural heritage of the Pocono region by conserving land and inspiring people to care for, enjoy and explore their natural world. PHLT works cooperatively with landowners to preserve their property and leave a legacy of protected natural habitats, healthy forest, clean waterways and open space for future generations.

You can help Pocono Heritage Land Trust protect land for the future. Learn about membership and volunteer opportunities at www.phlt.org.

PLEASE DONATE to preserve important lands and natural resources in the Poconos, for generations to come.

- \$25** provides supplies for one trash cleanup day, or one planting of wildflower seeds for meadow habitat restoration.
- \$50** buys tools for managing invasive plants on volunteer days.
- \$150** prints 500 trail brochures to guide visitors on preserves.
- \$500** builds a streamcrossing bridge to improve trail access.
- \$1,500** covers the cost of an appraisal, the first step in acquiring new land for preservation.
- \$3,000** funds construction of a sign kiosk on a new preserve.
- \$5,000** enables development of a new nature trail network, including trail marking, clearing, signage and maps.

Donate online at phlt.org/donate.html

or clip this form and send it with your check made out to Pocono Heritage Land Trust to:

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