

*This is part one of a series of articles that inform the public of an ambitious project that will benefit our local communities in many ways. Claverack Rural Electric Cooperative has undertaken a lawn-to-native pollinator habitat transition project on the grounds of their headquarters building, located along Route 6 in Wysox, Pennsylvania. Expected benefits include improved environmental stewardship, evaluating new right-of-way management strategies, educational opportunities for local students and groups, and reduced maintenance costs. Claverack is a rural electric cooperative that is owned by the members we serve.*

## Why Green Isn't Always Good

“We humans are the only creatures that think a nice flat, short, green lawn is a good thing. Every other species on earth views such a lawn as a barren desert.” My friend, Kevin Brown, from the Bradford County Conservation District made this stunning statement. He’s known for making provocative statements, so I had to investigate his claim.

To start my investigation, I attended the Forest Landowners Conference in State College last year. The conference is sponsored by the James C. Finley Center for Private Forests and the Penn State College of Agricultural Sciences. The conference provided a wealth of information about forestry, logging, wildlife, invasive plants, land management, and pollinators.

While at the conference my wife and I met Mike and Laura Jackson from Bedford County, Pennsylvania, and we attended a presentation by Laura on a lawn-to-native pollinator habitat transition project on their property. The Jacksons are retired educators and are also very talented photographers.

The photographs they provided were exquisite. They demonstrated the benefits of creating a native pollinator habitat with incredible photos of butterflies, moths, bees, wasps, flies, and other insects. They also shared photos of plants, flowers, landscapes and wildlife from their project.

They explained the costs, benefits, challenges, required efforts, expectations, disappointments and surprises during their project. Mike and Laura had a great story, and I not only increased my environmental knowledge, but I made new friends as well.

After the conference, I participated in a strategic planning session with the board and management at Claverack Rural Electric Cooperative, where I work as the Member Service Director. One of the things we wanted to implement was an intentional communications project that engages and benefits our communities.

So, we adopted our own lawn-to-native pollinator habitat transition project, and this spring we began preparing the lawn for a fall planting of a native pollinator wildflower seed mix.

If you drive by our headquarters, located in Wysox, you’ll notice that four of the thirteen acres that we traditionally mow have turned brown. Those areas are intentionally designed

to become native wildflower meadows in support of Pennsylvania pollinators, wildlife and songbirds.

In addition to providing critical habitat for pollinators, we foresee a lot of other benefits-reduced mowing costs, evaluation of new right-of-way management strategies, and hosting local science class field trips. Over the next several weeks, I will be sharing information about our exciting project right here in this column. Stay tuned.