

# My Story



## In the Heart of the City

### Tacony Creek Park & Trail

*By Keith Russell, Audubon Pennsylvania*

***"TTF now offers many other bird and nature walks along with a variety of other activities to connect local residents to the creek."***



On July 17, 2013, I had the good fortune to finally visit Tacony Creek Park for the first time. Despite having grown up in the city of Philadelphia and having worked in the city for eight years as a program manager for the National Audubon Society, Tacony Creek Park was the one major section of the city's 10,000-acre Fairmount Park system that I'd never visited. On that eventful day in 2013--thanks to a connection arranged by a colleague--I met with a representative from the Student Conservation Association (SCA) to plan a hike along the creek with SCA interns working there on conservation projects. A week later I was walking the trail along the creek with a dozen interns discussing native plants, storm water runoff, water quality, and birds. Within a short time my work with SCA had opened a door to become involved with the friends group for the Tacony Creek--the Tooknay-Tacony Frankford Watershed



**Keystone Fund Investment:** \$255,000

**Total Public/Private Investment:** \$2.1 million

Partnership, known as TTF-- and by that December I had led my first bird walk along the creek for TTF.

Since my introduction to Tacony Creek Park my love for the area has grown, not only because of the wonderful opportunities the

Tacony offers for bird observation, but also for the wonderful way in which TTF has worked with thousands of people in the communities that lie in close proximity to the park. In addition to the bird walks I lead, TTF now offers many other bird and nature walks throughout the year along with a variety of other activities from summer block parties to plantings and cleanups designed to connect local residents to the creek and the natural world.

**Learn more at [KeystoneFund.org](http://KeystoneFund.org).**

Every section of parkland in Philadelphia is unique in terms of its size, terrain, biodiversity, and the people who use it. Tacony Creek Park lies deep within the heart of the city where it is more completely surrounded by densely populated residential

communities, shopping malls, highways, railroad lines, and other forms of urban development than almost any other major section of Fairmount Park. Therefore, it has been heavily impacted by civilization over time. But TTF has worked with the Department of Parks and Recreation, the city's ecologically minded Water Department, and other organizations to transform this once-degraded stream valley into an area that is increasingly being appreciated for its ecological value than for its value as a dumping ground.

During a particularly exciting bird walk along the creek with community residents on May 10, 2014 I was amazed by the sheer numbers of migrating songbirds that we were finding--from Worm-eating, Blue-winged, and Bay-breasted Warblers to Gray-cheeked Thrushes and a White-eyed Vireo--when up popped a Red-headed Woodpecker. Our excitement nearly tripled as we got to see this beautiful but rare bird for an extended period of time.

People participating in TTF's programming or just walking through Tacony Creek Park have experienced moments like these (though not always with a Red-headed woodpecker) countless times in recent years. These moments are made possible by the conservation work along the creek funded by the William Penn



Foundation, Philadelphia Water Department, Army Corps of Engineers, Student Conservation Association, Friends Hospital, and other organizations who value the hundreds of acres of forested land still preserved along the creek

in Philadelphia and Montgomery County where the creek's headwaters begin.

I am honored to have worked with many talented and dedicated people over the last few years who are trying to make the Tacony a better place for people and the vast array of other organisms that inhabit the creek valley, from beavers to freshwater mussels. I look forward to seeing what this wonderful urban oasis will become as these efforts continue to transform it.

**[Learn more at KeystoneFund.org.](http://KeystoneFund.org)**