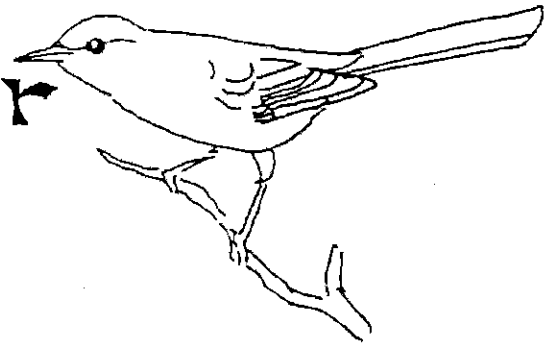


# The Gnatcatcher



Newsletter of the  
**Juniata Valley Audubon Society**

P.O. Box 71, Tyrone, Pennsylvania 16686

Vol. 32, No. 2 – April 2000

## DCNR To Expand State Forest ATV Trails

By Dr. Stan Kotala

A recent directive from Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Secretary John Oliver has ordered the DCNR staff to increase all-terrain vehicle (ATV) and off-highway motorcycle (OHM, or dirt bike) trails on state forest and state park lands.

Two kinds of ATV/OHM trails are envisioned by the DCNR:

- Scenic view ATV/OHM driving trails
- “Rip and tear” ATV/OHM stunt-riding trails

This kind of development would be detrimental to state park and state forest ecosystems for the following reasons:

- Noise pollution
- Destruction of soil/erosion
- Destruction of plants
- Alteration of water channels
- Sedimentation of waterways
- Air pollution
- Water pollution from leaking lubricants
- Disturbance to wildlife
- Disturbance to people seeking a “wilderness” experience

Our state forest lands already have far too many roads. We don't need more roads. On the contrary, most existing roads should be closed to motorized vehicles or restored to their natural state.

While doing field work for the Reptile and Amphibian Atlas Project last year in the Rothrock and Tuscarora State Forests I noticed many box turtles, wood turtles, red-bellied snakes, ring-necked snakes, milk snakes, green snakes, black snakes, copperheads, timber rattlesnakes, wood frogs, green

[ Cont'd on page 14 ]

### — April Program —

**ANNUAL SPRING BANQUET.** Dr. Timothy O'Connell, a research associate with the Penn State Cooperative Wetlands Center, in State College, will talk on the index he has developed that examines bird communities to assess overall ecosystem condition in the central Appalachians (see page 9).

A delicious roast beef and turkey dinner with all the trimmings will be served family style. \$12 per person. See enclosed reservation form. Please mail your check to Marge Hoyer by Apr. 18.

6:30 P.M., Tuesday, April 25 at Trinity United Methodist Church, 533 Main St., Bellwood. Social hour at 6 o'clock.

### — April Field Trip —

**BIRDING THE LOWER TRAIL.** Observe wood warblers and other spring migrants on the Lower Trail, along the Frankstown Branch of the Juniata River. Meet at the Alfarata trail head at 8 A.M. We shall return at noon. Trip leader: JVAS Director Dave Kyler (phone 643-3030).

Saturday, Apr. 29

## The Gnatcatcher

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JUNIATA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY  
Charlie Hoyer, Editor  
P.O. Box 32  
Tyrone, PA 16686-0032

The Juniata Valley Audubon Society (JVAS) is a chapter of the National Audubon Society serving members in Bedford, Blair, Fulton, Huntingdon, and Mifflin Counties.

Program meetings of the JVAS are held in the Visitor Center at Canoe Creek State Park, near Hollidaysburg, on the third Tuesday of the month in February, March, May, September, October, and November at 7:30 P.M. (A business meeting is at 7 o'clock.) The public is invited to attend.

### Officers

President ..... Terry Wentz 692-4224  
<Blue5bird@aol.com>  
Vice-President ..... Charlie Hoyer 684-7376  
<charma@nb.net>  
Secretary ..... Eugene Zielinski 353-8212  
<eez55@juno.com>  
Treasurer ..... Marge Hoyer 684-7376  
<charma@nb.net>

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<garynsarah@prodigy.net>  
Field Trips ..... Janet Huber 942-5752  
<avianao@aol.com>  
Publications & Publicity Charlie Hoyer (see above)  
Education ..... Shirley Wagoner 643-4011  
<swagoner@vicon.net>  
Hospitality ..... Barb Corle 276-3428  
Historian ..... (open)

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Fund-raising Director ... Anne Borland 695-9718  
Director of Ornithology Debora Wentz 692-4224  
<dkw1952@aol.com>  
Director-at-Large ..... Dave Kyler 643-6030  
<kylerdw@vicon.net>  
JVAS Chapter Delegate to the Pennsylvania  
Audubon Society ..... Paula Ford 695-4799  
<pxf3@email.psu.edu>

## President's Message

This is my last "President's Message," as my two-year term will be ending with the installation of a new president at our annual banquet on April 25<sup>th</sup>. When I had accepted the nomination, I agreed to the two-year term with the stipulation that the vice-president would then move up to president. President-elect Charlie Hoyer is now looking for a Juniata Valley Audubon Society member to accept the vice-president office to fill in for one year until elections are held in 2001.

I hope that I have started a trend and the vice-president will continue to move up to president at the end of a two-year term. Most organizations function in this manner, which brings continuity and keeps the president from the "burnt out" syndrome. The other elected offices and board members of the JVAS should be handled the same way. New blood is always needed to keep an organization viable.

There are lots of challenges and opportunities for JVAS members to get involved with. Among these are major highway construction projects throughout central Pennsylvania, resource management plans, studies for a variety of environmental agencies, and lots of "growing greener" projects being funded with state and federal monies. Over the next five years, more money will be spent on conservation projects than has been spent over the last thirty years. The opportunities are there.

A warm thank you goes out to all those JVAS members who helped me over the past three years.

Cheers!

*Terry Wentz*

## Welcome, New Members!

Samuel Adams, Altoona	Bill & Jean Lynch, Altoona
William Adams, Hyndman	Garvey Manor, Hollidaysburg
Janet Ansman, Altoona	Donald Moore, Tyrone
Ethel M. Baker, Altoona	Richard Sanders, Altoona
Marian L. Ehredt, Duncansville	Maggie M. Sanders, Hollidaysburg
Bradley Elison, Huntingdon	D.R. Smith, Bedford
Gerard R. Frederick, Altoona	C.M. Smith, Alum Bank
Robert Gosnell, James Creek	Mrs. M.J. Thomas, Altoona
Mr. & Mrs. Arlo Greer, Bedford	Dr. Margaret Towne, Huntingdon
Catherine Grove, Bellwood	Verna Tremmel, Claysburg
Doris Helwig, Alexandria	Harry O. Vipond, Altoona
Donna Holmberg, Altoona	Steven & Jenny Volgstadt, Huntingdon
Harry E. Johnson, Clearville	Michael Weirich, Altoona
Thomas L. Lewis, Hopewell	Carol A. Weld, Altoona
Sylvia M. Lewis, Tyrone	J.M. Wolfe, Altoona
Melissa Long, Tyrone	Marsha Wright, Altoona

## CONSERVATION

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By Sarah Miller

**Land-Use Planning a  
Top Issue for 2000**

Recently I attended a talk on "Smart Growth" by Thomas Hylton, Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and author of the book, *Save Our Lands, Save Our Towns*. Smart Growth, as the name implies, is not anti-growth, but pro-sustainable growth, that is, growth that supports the economic and social viability of established cities and towns while preserving open space and quality of life.

At the heart of Smart Growth is the idea of livable communities or what we may refer to today as traditional communities. Livable communities are those where people of different incomes and ethnic backgrounds live together in closely-spaced dwellings. Neighborhoods are within walking distance of stores, offices, factories and schools. In livable communities, people know their neighbors and share a sense of place and belonging.

The idea of livable communities is not new. In fact, prior to World War II, traditional cities and towns were the norm. The building boom after the war, however, brought an end to this type of development. Older towns and cities were abandoned as the middle class fled to the suburbs. To accommodate this migration, developments sprang up on once picturesque farmlands and forests. The result is what Penn State professor Pierce Lewis calls "galactic cities" — large expanses of colorless subdivisions, strip malls, corporate centers, and industrial parks scattered as haphazardly as the stars. In short, urban sprawl.

The Borough of Tyrone, where I live, is a prime example of what has befallen many older cities and towns across Pennsylvania. Settled in 1850, Tyrone once boasted a thriving downtown district. Today many neighborhoods are in disrepair, storefronts lay abandoned, and the old high school has been discarded in favor of a new facility on the outskirts of town.

While miles and miles of strip malls and subdivisions may look like progress to some, what many people don't realize is that sprawl actually costs money. New developments require new infrastructure — roads, sewer systems, schools, community services, etc., and it is the taxpayers who traditionally foot the bill. Redevelopment of our older cities, on the other hand, makes much more sense economically because the infrastructure is already in place to support growth. By allowing our older cities and towns to decay, we are abandoning or underutilizing the enormous investment made in infrastructure, an asset that already has been paid for by you and me. And many states are beginning to realize this. As Maryland Governor Parris Glendening stated "Maryland will go bankrupt building the roads, schools, and other facilities needed to accommodate the kind of sprawling suburban growth patterns that have characterized the last few decades."

Many of Pennsylvania's land-use ills stem from the laws and regulations governing municipalities, which are little more than a recipe for sprawl. By far, the greatest impediment to sound land-use planning in Pennsylvania is the Municipalities Planning Code (MPC). As it stands, the MPC mandates that municipalities that zone must zone for all potential uses — in short, "a mall and a quarry for every town." Therefore, if a municipality chooses to zone, it must provide for undesirable as well as desirable land uses. Those that choose not to zone, however, are vulnerable to haphazard and poorly planned development.

Even when municipalities zone and try to plan for future growth, "curative amendment challenges" by developers can overturn these regulations, leaving the municipality little to do but step aside and let the bulldozers in. In addition to state laws, federal legislation promoting sprawl such as the Private Property Rights Implementation Act of 1999 (sponsored by Representative John Peterson and recently passed in the House) will make it easier for developers to sue municipalities who deny them the right to build anything they want anywhere they want.

But there is hope that Pennsylvania is beginning to address the issues of poor land-use planning and sprawl. In 1998, Governor Ridge's 21<sup>st</sup> Century Environment Commission named sprawl and responsible land use as the number one environmental issue for Pennsylvania over the next century. More recently, the nine counties making up the Juniata River Watershed also named land-use planning as the number-one concern during public hearings for the Juniata River Management Plan. And in February of this year, Governor Ridge announced a "Growing Smarter Initiative" that would allocate \$3.6 million in funding to aid municipalities in land-use planning. Among the changes proposed by the Growing Smarter Initiative are revisions to the Municipalities Planning Code to allow for the designation of growth areas and transfer of development rights. In addition, the initiative would strengthen local governments' ability to withstand curative amendment challenges.

There also are two key bills in the House (H.B. 13 and H.B. 14) that would reform the Municipalities Planning Code to help local governments better plan for growth, while protecting natural, cultural, and historic resources. H.B. 13 encourages joint planning and zoning and would require local plans and ordinances to be consistent with the plans of contiguous municipalities and the county. H.B. 14 would provide a variety of planning tools for municipalities such as inter-municipal transfer of develop-

ment rights and the designation of growth and rural resource areas. These tools are critical to give local communities the ability to decide where to encourage growth and where to protect farmland and open space.

Here's what you can do to help stop sprawl and promote "Smart Growth":

**Write, call, or e-mail your legislators.** Tell them you support legislation that would reform the Municipalities Planning Code and promote the use of tools such as growth boundaries and transfer of development rights. Also, write Representative Peterson (307 Cannon Building, Washington, DC 20512) and state that you are against any legislation that would undermine local land-use planning efforts.

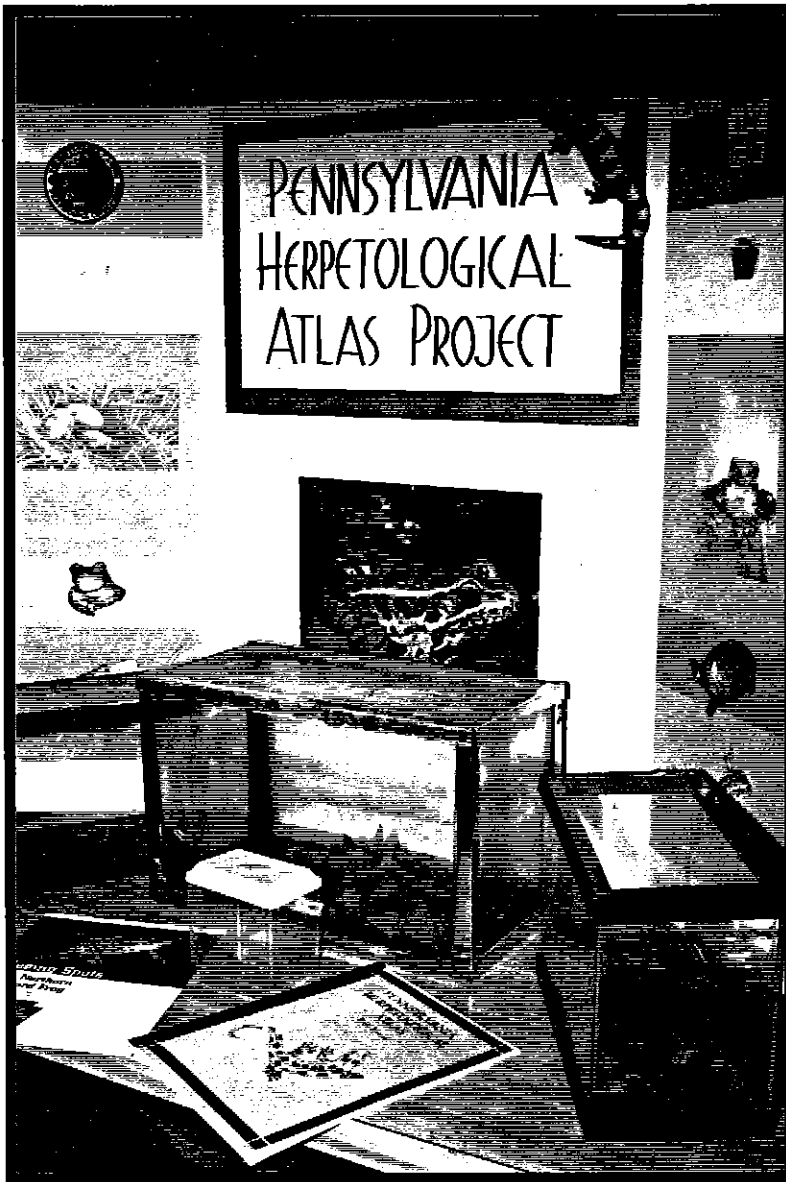
**Participate in the planning process.** Each one of us has a say in what happens in our communities through our local municipal government. You can choose to let developers plan the future of your community or participate in the planning process yourself by attending local township board meetings. Meetings generally are held monthly and are open to the public. Let your commissioners know that you are genuinely concerned with land use in your community. Remember that these elected officials work for you and that your voice in local issues matters.

For more information on land use planning, visit the 10,000 Friends of Pennsylvania Web site at <[www.10000friends.org](http://www.10000friends.org)>. ❖



### Worth Noting

**Up in smoke** — Household trash burned in backyard barrels may release more toxics than a municipal waste incinerator serving tens of thousands of homes, according to an EPA report. EPA tests found the dioxins and furans released from two to forty burning barrels were found to approximate the amount released from a 200-ton-per-day municipal incinerator with well-functioning pollution controls. "With improved pollution controls on incinerators, backyard burning may turn out to be one of the largest sources of dioxins and furans to the air," said Dwain Winters of the EPA. About 20 million people burn trash in their backyards. ❖



## Y2K Herpetological Atlas Season Begins

The exuberant calls of spring peepers herald the start of the fourth year of the Pennsylvania Herpetological Atlas Project. This endeavor seeks to map the ranges and gage the abundance of the Keystone State's reptiles and amphibians.

Coordinated by Dr. Art Hulse, of the Indiana University of Pennsylvania, atlasers record the herps that they find during the course of the year. This collection of data will culminate in an atlas of the Commonwealth's herpetofauna to be published around 2005 — a year after the project's completion.

If you would like to receive data collection forms to record your sightings for this year, call Dr. Stan Kotala at (814) 946-8840 or Dr. Art Hulse at (724) 357-2279. All observations are important to the project, even if they are just incidental sightings of one individual.

Thanks for your help! ❖

— Dr. Stan Kotala  
Elberta, Sinking Valley

This exhibit, assembled by Dr. Stan Kotala and his daughter Helena, was on display at the JVAS March program meeting. On view were live tree frogs, spotted salamanders, and spring peepers.

## Blair County Chapter of PA Cleanways To Clean Up Dump Site Along Lower Trail

The newly formed Blair County Chapter of PA Cleanways will be conducting its inaugural cleanup at an illegal dump along Lower Trail on Saturday, April 15. The cleanup will begin at 9 A.M. with a brief safety orientation meeting. The site is along the hillside near Mount Etna and is all too familiar to those of us who enjoy using the trail.

Volunteers should meet at the Mount Etna parking area located on S.R. 2017. Volunteers should wear appropriate clothing and sturdy footwear. If possible, please bring along heavy-duty work gloves, metal garden rakes, and five-gallon plastic buckets. Extra gloves and tools will be available.

[ Cont'd on page 10 ]

# **JVAS Field Trip To Plummer's Hollow Private Nature Reserve**

**MARCH 25, 2000**

Text and photos by  
Dr. Stan Kotala

After a pleasant two-mile walk viewing the biodiversity of different wildlife habitats at Plummer's Hollow Private Nature Reserve, JVAS members enjoy lunch with their hosts — Marcia, Bruce, and Dave Bonta.



**JVAS Director of  
Ornithology Debbie  
Wentz and President  
Terry Wentz take a  
mid-hike break near  
the crest of Brush  
Mountain.**





**Bruce Bonta discusses the management plan for the reserve, which is dedicated to the restoration and preservation of native biodiversity.**



**While the meek were deterred by the threat of thunderstorms, these JVAS members were rewarded with a glorious ramble through the woods and fields.**

## North American Migration Counts

Many of you have participated in the JVAS Christmas Bird Counts (CBC), sponsored by the National Audubon Society. The North American Migration Count (NAMC) is like the CBC, but with a twist. The rules are simple — spend a day in the field counting birds in a specified area and keep track of hours and miles by foot, car, boat, or feeder-watching. The area for any one count is not a fifteen-mile diameter circle, but an entire county. The twist is in the timing. Unlike CBCs, which are spread over several weeks, these counts are done on just a *single day* (in spring and fall) across the entire forty-eight states. The North American Migration Count consists of two annual counts — the second Saturday in May and the third Saturday in September.

A count area consists of an individual county. The idea is to spread coverage to as many kinds of habitat as possible to at least get an indication of the presence or absence of a species. Ideally, coverage should be proportional to the area of the habitat in the county, but observers will be inclined to getting into woodlands for warblers and spending a lesser amount of time looking in pastures.

Each county coordinator tabulates all observers' results for the county, making sure that observers

have reported hours and miles and have given details for unusual sightings. County coordinators then forward the results to the state coordinator.

Four separate lists are tallied:

**Stationary** — the observer stays in one place and counts migrating birds (a hawk-watch, for example).

**Feeder** — the observer who attracts birds to his or her yard and do *all* of their observations in or near the yard. (In general, the observer does not move and the birds are more or less stationary.)

**Regular** — contains all of the birds found dawn-to-dusk (or any time you have available) by observers who are moving from place to place by foot, car, boat, etc. In general, the observers move and count birds that are more or less stationary.

**Night** — birds seen or heard before dawn and after dusk.

If you'd like to participate as an observer in the spring NAMC to be held Saturday, May 13, please phone Charlie Hoyer at 684-7376 or e-mail him at <charma@nb.net> to obtain tally sheets. ❖

— Charlie Hoyer  
Blair County NAMC Coordinator

## Seasonal Occurrence Reports For Birds of Pennsylvania

The seasonal occurrences of birds in Pennsylvania are tabulated by county in *Pennsylvania Birds*, the quarterly journal of the Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology (PSO). Tabulations are based on reports by observers in the various counties. Observers mail quarterly reports to the county compiler, who, in turn, forwards a final tabulation to the editor of *Pennsylvania Birds*.

Kinds of information requested on the various species are:

- Present all of the quarter
- Present part of the quarter

- Present from the beginning of the quarter to a particular date
- Present from a particular date to the end of the quarter
- Permanent resident
- Unusual early date of arrival or departure
- Unusual late date of arrival or departure
- Unusually high number
- Unusually low number
- Something noteworthy

Please don't think that if you were willing to be an observer that you'd be obliged to be in the field



## Annual JVAS Spring Banquet: Tuesday, April 25

Trinity United Methodist Church  
533 Main St., Bellwood

\$12 per person

Social Hour 6 P.M. • Family-style Dinner 6:30 P.M.



Dr. Timothy J. O'Connell is a research associate with the Penn State Cooperative Wetlands Center, in State College. Tim attended Cornell University where he received a bachelor's degree in natural resources. As an undergraduate, he conducted a study on kleptoparasitism in ring-billed gulls. He went on to pursue a master's degree in biology from the College of William and Mary. In addition to his research, his summers were spent conducting extensive surveys of loggerhead shrikes, Bachman's sparrows, plovers, and oystercatchers on Virginia's barrier islands. In 1999, he completed his doctorate degree in ecology at Penn State.

PROGRAM BY TIMOTHY J. O'CONNELL

### "Bird Communities and Ecological Condition In the Central Appalachians"

As a portion of his Ph.D. research at Pennsylvania State University, Tim has developed an index that examines bird communities to assess overall ecosystem condition. His Bird Community Index or, "BCI," sorts sites into one of several categories based on the songbird species occurring at the site.

Sites are ranked according to the relative proportions of species that share particular life history traits (e.g., insectivores, exotics). The BCI is intended to provide a "quick-and-dirty" assessment of ecological condition at large scales. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is interested in using BCIs across the country to produce a national "report card" on ecological condition. Tim says, "Although it may sound clinical at first, the story of the BCI is a fascinating tale of wandering on forgotten back roads, crashing through briars, and running from unfriendly cattle on our way to showing that we birders had everything figured a long time ago."

with your tally sheets daily throughout the quarter. For example, whenever you notice an arrival or the departure of a species, make a note of it and later record it to your tally sheet. Keep in mind that there are other observers in the county also recording notes — each with different accounts. Many observers may not see certain species even though they certainly occur in the county. Some observers will see many more waterbirds, whereas others will see more woodland birds or pasture birds. The various data will "come out in the wash" as they're tabulated by the county compiler.

If you'd like to participate as an observer of the seasonal occurrences of birds anywhere (and any time) in a certain county on a quarterly basis, please phone one of the following county compilers to obtain instructions and tally sheets:

Bedford — Janet Shaffer, 814-356-3553

Blair — Charlie Hoyer, 814-684-7376,

<charma@nb.net>

Cambria —

Gloria Lamer, 724-349-1159 and

Georgette Syster, 724-349-6293

Centre — John & Becky Peplinski,

814-238-6541, <jdp3@psu.edu>

Clearfield — Gene Zielinski, 814-353-8212,

<eez55@juno.com>

Fulton — Dan Snell, 717-294-6344

Huntingdon — Greg Grove, 814-667-2305,

<gwg2@psu.edu>

Mifflin — Margaret Kenepp, 717-899-6252,

<mkenep@lcworkshop.com> ❖

— Charlie Hoyer

Blair County Compiler for PSO

## Raptor Excitement in Tyrone

At midday on February 19, I was at the corner of Logan Avenue and 12th Street in downtown Tyrone (beside the Ace hardware store). I had just locked the door to the Jeep and looked up into the sky toward Bald Eagle Mountain when I saw a dark, teardrop-shaped object falling from the sky. I knew immediately what it was as it cut through the large flock of pigeons that always hangs out on the church across the street. With an explosion of feathers, Tyrone was less one pigeon. I unlocked the Jeep, dug out my binoculars and observed an immature, male peregrine falcon pluck the unfortunate Columbigiform from the roof of the church. Feathers drifted slowly to 12th Street. Not bad excitement for the middle of February in Tyrone! ❖

— Mark Shields  
Arch Spring, Sinking Valley

## Juniata Wetland Monitoring Project Volunteers Recognized

The Southern Alleghenies Wetland Monitoring Project, which began in 1999 under a contract from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, has completed its first year with major successes. The project has refined the procedures and protocols to assess wetlands in the Juniata River Basin in Pennsylvania.

Last summer saw field teams consisting of a team of nine undergraduate students from four area colleges and universities test field procedures that will be used in this summer's field analysis. Students worked with the staff of the Penn State Cooperative Wetlands Center and learned wetland inventory, reconnaissance, and condition protocols. They tested their knowledge by visiting more than twenty wetland sites. Field work included data collection, surveying, mapping, soil examination, vegetation identification, habitat suitability, and other observations. The students also worked on property identification and access work.

Since all the students we enrolled in the U.S. PA

NRCS Earth Team Volunteer Program, the Southern Alleghenies Resource Conservation & Development Council and the Conservancy nominated the team and an individual team member for both state and national volunteer recognition. Because of the degree of dedicated service and enthusiasm that each of the team members exhibited, the group captured both the state and national regional "Volunteers of the Year" award.

Team members included Nina Brindle, Britton Burnworth, and Margaret Tavalsky of the University of Pittsburgh - Johnstown; Tim Kasper, Bill Kelly, Brad Livingston, Jennifer Peterson, and Eric Renninger of Penn State University; and Lucas Book of the Pennsylvania College of Technology. In addition, Margaret Tavalsky was recognized as the "National Volunteer of the Year" in the Mid-Atlantic Region for 1999.

The awards were presented to the students at the January 28 quarterly meeting of the Southern Alleghenies RC&D Council in Bedford. Janet Oertly, NRCS State Conservationist, along with Rose Marie Updegraff, State Volunteer Coordinator, were on hand to present the awards. ❖

— Len Lichvar, Executive Director  
Southern Alleghenies Conservancy

## ... Cleanup on Lower Trail [Cont'd from page 5]

Volunteers for the cleanup must be at least 12 years of age. Youngsters from age 12 to 16 must be accompanied by a parent or guardian. Volunteers under 18 must have a signed parental consent form. All volunteers will be asked to sign a liability waiver form.

Lunch and refreshments will be provided. The Blair County PA Cleanways Chapter welcomes any and all volunteers from the JVAS to help out with this very worthwhile effort. If you have any questions, please call Chapter President David A. Thomas at 941-2035 or Director Gary A. Miller at 684-2226. This is a rain-or-shine event. ❖

— Gary Miller  
Tyrone

## Earth Day 2000 — Living Green

Three years ago I attended a seminar at a local governmental agency, promoting gardening for wildlife. Since then I've been finding more and more articles about planting for birds and other wildlife. I don't have an estate or even a meadow, but I figure whatever I can do is worthwhile. I try to leave a few dead branches for the birds on trees where they do not endanger anyone. I also try to plant wildflowers and native perennials that provide seed for native birds.

One year we experimented with leaving a back part of the lawn to grow wild, as is often recommended. I have to admit, however, that while this did provide a somewhat sheltered passage for small mammals such as squirrels, rabbits, and opossums, it backfired when my husband was bitten by yellow jackets nesting in the undisturbed soil while he was mowing in a previously prohibited area!

Since then, I limit my efforts to growing native plants and wildflowers that provide food for our birds in winter, unlike most exotic plants. I also try to leave many seedheads through the winter and don't trim them until the spring growing season begins.

Unlike most folks, we enjoy seeing the wildlife in our backyard, even the groundhog that finds shelter in the thick evergreens adjoining our lawn. If I tried to grow a vegetable garden, perhaps I wouldn't feel quite so welcoming, but since I have no good place to grow any vegetables, I'm happy to let the rabbits and the groundhog consume the broad-leaved weeds in our lawn, which they do.

If I had the space, I'd plant a meadow of wildflowers and native grasses that would grow wild most of the year. I don't have room for a meadow but I'm trying for an area of wildflowers in the only dependably sunny place we have.

Jim Motavalli, in his book, *Environmental Defense*, recommends the following as "greener" alternatives to grass:

- Convert your green carpet into a wilder lawn. By raising your mower deck to the highest setting,

you'll encourage violets, cinquefoil, and speedwell to take hold and bloom.

- In shady spots, native ground covers such as low-bush blueberry, wild ginger, and moss phlox remain green year round. They also provide food and shelter for wildlife.

- Conserve water through creative landscaping; plant grass suited to your local climate. In the East, this may mean a variety of fescue.

- Minimize watering (brown is the natural color of grass in late summer) and use nitrogen-fixing clover instead of fertilizer. Forego herbicides and don't bag your grass clippings — an excellent natural fertilizer or compost.

- If you have the space, a natural meadow area planted with wildflowers and tall, waving prairie grasses is a low-maintenance alternative that requires mowing just once a year (in late autumn, to disperse seeds).

Motavalli also recommends allowing fallen leaves to fertilize the ground in the winter, rather than disposing of them. However, I know doing that would kill a lot of grass, so I find other uses for them such as maintaining woodland paths or composting. I also compost grass clippings where they are thick enough to damage the lawn, but I leave them if they are scattered.

Motavalli suggests two natural gardening books: *The Wild Lawn Handbook: Alternatives to the Traditional Front Lawn*, by Stevie Daniels (Macmillan), and *Landscaping with Wildflowers: An Environmental Approach to Gardening*, by Jim Wilson (Houghton Mifflin). The Backyard Wildlife Habitat Program at the National Wildlife Federation (phone 703-790-4499) also may be helpful. I also suggest *Your Backyard Wildlife Year*, by Marcus Schneck, or *The Bird Garden*, by Stephen W. Kress, both with forewords by Roger Tory Peterson. ❖

— Shirley Wagoner  
JVAS Education Chair

## River Otter Enhances New Pennsylvania License Plate

I'm pleased to say that the purchase of my pickup truck's new license plate, "RC 5901," will help support research and education related to Pennsylvania's native flora and fauna.

Celebrating the return of a protected species to "Penn's Woods," the new Wild Resource Conservation Fund plate features a river otter in its natural habitat with a riverbank in the foreground and a colorful sunset over the mountains in the background.

Thanks in part to the Wild Resource Conservation Fund, river otters, which nearly had vanished from Pennsylvania, have been restored in each major drainage basin of the state during the past two decades.

Pennsylvanians may purchase the Wild Resource Conservation Fund "river otter" license plate at PennDOT's driver and vehicle service centers or over the counter at PennDOT-approved, on-line messenger sites statewide. Customers also may mail applications for this new plate directly to PennDOT's Harrisburg headquarters for processing. Applications are available through the Pennsylvania home page.

The plate costs \$35, of which the Wild Resource Conservation Fund will receive \$15 with \$20 going to the state Motor License Fund. The \$35 fee is in addition to the regular vehicle registration cost.

To make way for the new "river otter" plate, PennDOT and the Wild Resource Conservation Fund jointly agreed to retire the "saw-whet owl" license plate. Introduced in 1993, the "owl" was the Commonwealth's first special-fund plate. With the number of sales topping 225,000, the "owl" plate was the best seller among the Commonwealth's special-fund license plates and generated approximately \$3 million for the Wild Resource Conservation Fund.

For more information on the fund, contact Frank Felbaum at (717) 783-1639. ❖

— Charlie Hoyer

## Cats Indoors! Campaign

Are you ...

Tired of your neighbors' cats killing birds and other wildlife on your property? Concerned about the health and well-being of your outdoor cat? Interested in learning how to turn your outdoor cat into a contented indoor pet? Concerned about the impact of cats on wildlife in your local park or community? Interested in getting local cat ordinances passed to address cat overpopulation?

Then get on the World Wide Web and click on <[www.abcbirds.org/catindoo.htm](http://www.abcbirds.org/catindoo.htm)>.

The Web site explains *Cats Indoors! The Campaign for Safer Birds and Cats*, which was initiated by the American Bird Conservancy to end the unnecessary suffering and death of birds and other wildlife caused by free-roaming domestic cats. *Cats Indoors!* seeks to educate cat owners, decision makers, and the general public that free-roaming cats pose a significant risk to birds and other wildlife, suffer themselves, and pose a threat to human health. *Cats Indoors!* encourages cat owners to keep their cats indoors and advocates laws, regulations, and policies to protect cats and birds, including the humane removal of free-roaming cats from areas important to wildlife.

Many items of educational materials can be downloaded

For information on the *Cats Indoors!* program contact:

Linda Winter Director  
*Cats Indoors!* Campaign  
American Bird Conservancy  
1250 24th Street, N.W., Suite 400  
Washington, DC 20037  
E-mail: [lwinter@abcbirds.org](mailto:lwinter@abcbirds.org)

— Paula Ford  
Chapter Delegate to PAS

Don't forget to send your BiLo Foods and Riverside Markets cash register tapes to Anne Borland at 138A Larch St., Hollidaysburg, PA 16648. Anne redeems the tapes for \$\$\$ for the JVAS.

## Unexpected Visitor

**S**ometimes we have unexpected visitors from the Little Juniata River, which winds around the end of our mountain. The most surprising one occurred on an overcast Sunday morning in late February. Our eldest son, Steve, was visiting for the weekend and, as I went into the kitchen, the intercom buzzer from the guest house went off.

"Mom, come quick! There's a beaver in the stream below the guest house!"

I grabbed my binoculars, pulled on my boots and jacket, and ran down in time to see a full-grown beaver emerge from the culvert pipe beneath the road. It stood up on its hind legs beside the drainage ditch to look around, and we had plenty of time to study its paddle-shaped tail lying flat on the lawn and admire its beautiful, dark brown coat.

Although sons Dave and Steve and I stood on the porch less than fifty feet away from the beaver, quietly talking, it seemed supremely unconcerned by our presence. No doubt it was looking over the terrain and trying to decide if it had potential as a future home. But two houses and three adult humans were probably enough to discourage it. After at least five minutes of indecision, it continued up the drainage ditch toward the power-line right-of-way, wading through the six inches or so of flowing water.

I rushed back to our house to rouse my husband, Bruce, who grabbed his camera and tripod. Together we ran to the power-line right-of-way ahead of the beaver. While I stood on one side, scanning downstream with my binoculars, Bruce crossed the

ditch and set up his camera and tripod on the embankment above.

When the beaver came into view, I quietly signaled to Bruce. I remained out of sight and watched while the beaver attempted to crawl over a fallen tree and then fell over backward. Undeterred by that setback, it tried again and made it over what must have been the last of dozens of fallen trees it had climbed over to reach our home a mile and a half from the river.

Still, it waddled determinedly up the ditch until it sensed Bruce above it and stopped. Again it sat

up on its hind legs and peered toward Bruce, who took many pictures before the beaver finally turned around reluctantly and headed downstream again.

Since the stream peters out above the power-line right-of-way and our mountain does not have the flat, marshy terrain or the food trees — aspens

and willows — that beavers prefer, I knew that the beaver had been on a fruitless quest. Still, if it was, as I suspected, a two-and-a-half-year-old who had voluntarily left its parents' lodge and was looking for a home of its own, it was a couple months ahead of schedule according to the books I checked. Usually a mature beaver leaves its parents and younger siblings between April and September and becomes a floater segment of the population, following water courses as far as twelve and a half miles from its natal home.

This beaver, like many of the wild creatures we encounter here, had not read the books and had instead set out on its own during February's thaw, convinced by the sound of flowing water that spring was here to stay. ❖

By Marcia Bonta



**... State Forest ATV Trails** [ *Cont'd from page 1* ]

frogs, pickerel frogs, eastern American toads, norther red salamanders, red efts, spotted salamanders, long-tailed salamanders, and red-backed salamanders crushed on state forest roads.

In the Michaux State Forest between Carlisle and Gettysburg, populations of wild turkeys are declining due to disturbances from large numbers of pleasure-seekers traveling along state forest roads — either legally in cars or illegally on dirt bikes and ATVs.

State forests, parks, and gamelands are the only parts of Pennsylvania where animals can live without completely being subjected to mankind's desire to maximize monetary profit. It would be grossly un-

just for us to further destroy the ecosystems they need to carry on their lives and evolutionary destiny. Our desire to "rip and tear" on an ATV cannot justifiably displace the need of a forest animal to live in its home.

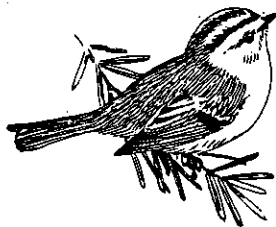
If you disagree with the DCNR's policy to construct additional ATV and dirt bike trails on state forest lands and state park lands, write a note to:

John C. Oliver  
Secretary, DCNR  
P.O. Box 8767  
Harrisburg, PA 17105-8767  
Phone: (717) 787-2689

Thanks for your help! ❖

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**Juniata Valley Audubon Society**  
**P.O. Box 71**  
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