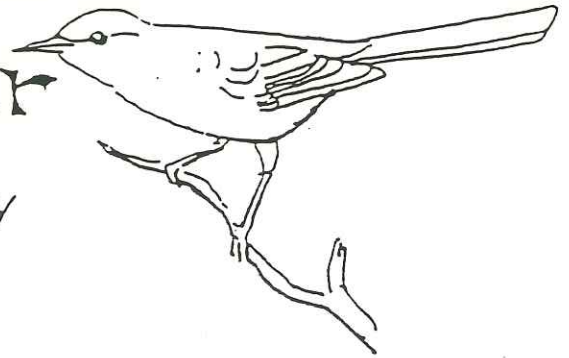


The Gnatcatcher

JUNIATA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY



MARCH 1992

MARCH PROGRAM: RAILS TO TRAILS

Jennifer Barefoot of Rails to Trails of Blair County will present an informative program regarding past accomplishments and future projects of Rails to Trails in central Pennsylvania. A pamphlet describing the mission of this organization is attached to this month's "Gnatcatcher." Also enclosed in the center of this newsletter is a description and map of the Lower Trail, the site of our April field trip.

TIME: 31 March 1992 (Tuesday) at 7:30 P.M.

PLACE: 5th Avenue United Methodist Church
5th Avenue and 4th Street
Altoona

FIELD TRIP: THE LOWER TRAIL

Members of the Juniata Valley Audubon Society will join members of Rails to Trails for a day exploring the Lower Trail on Saturday, April 4th. We will meet at the Williamsburg Trail Head at 7:00 A.M.. This promises to be a great time for all! Come to our March meeting for further details!

IMPERILED WETLANDS

Wetlands are the critical feeding, breeding, and spawning grounds for one third of America's endangered plants and animals, as well as a myriad of waterfowl, migratory songbirds, and other wildlife. Wetlands recharge groundwater supplies, control floods, cushion coastlines from storms, support our commercial fishing industries, and naturally purify waters that flow through them. Unfortunately, wetlands are being destroyed at an alarming rate; between 300,000 and 500,000 acres annually in the continental United States!

Despite their enormous values and high rate of loss, wetlands currently are being besieged by those who would increase the rate of their destruction. Last year, powerful special interests pressured the White House into an attempt to redefine more than half of the nation's wetlands out of existence. This spring, those same lobbies are trying to convince Congress to pass S.1463, which would dismantle Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, the only federal law which regulates the destruction of wetlands! S.1463 is unacceptable for the following reasons:

1. It would redefine half of the nation's already shrinking wetlands out of existence by setting unscientific standards for wetlands identification.
2. It would eliminate EPA's role in the Section 404 program.
3. It would arbitrarily classify wetlands as being of low, medium, or high value, allowing the lowest category to be destroyed at will, and protecting the highest category only at enormous cost to the taxpayer.

The Senate Environment and Public Works Committee will start debate on Clean

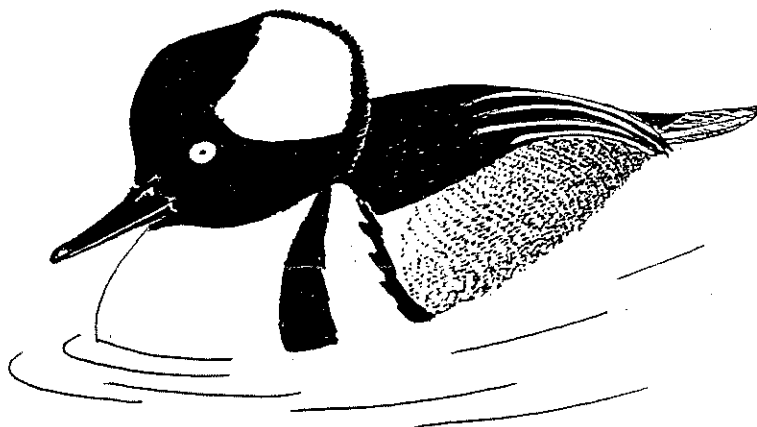


Water Act reauthorization this month. Senator Wofford of Pennsylvania sits on this committee. In order that wetlands protection remains intact, it is essential that Senator Wofford hears the opinions of his concerned constituency. Please write a letter to the Senator asking him to oppose S.1463 for the reasons mentioned on the previous page. We must make our views known.

The Honorable Harris Wofford
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

CANOE CREEK STATE PARK SPECIAL AREAS PROJECT

JVAS vice-president Bill King is coordinating the Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology Special Areas Project covering Canoe Creek State Park. Volunteers are needed to help in taking a census of the park's avian population on Sunday, 29 March 1992. Many thanks to Gary Koch, Terry Wentz, Dave Kyler, and Stan Kotala for their help in January and February. Anyone wishing to participate in this endeavor may call Bill King at (814) 942-7673.



Hooded Merganser
by Stan Kotala

INTERNATIONAL ISSUES by Marcia Bonta

We would like to thank Truth Close for her donation of a sleeping bag to our "Help a Honduran Outdoor Education Project." Mark took it back with him to his Peace Corps colleague in late January. It is still not too late to donate to this project - - backpacks, tents, tent repair kits, sleeping bags, binoculars, backpack stoves, fuel bottles, 10" cooking pots and frying pans, compasses, 3 gallon water bags, first-aid and snakebite kits, 1-2 liter water bottles, etc. are all useful. Some of us will visit Honduras for two weeks next summer as part of an ecotour Mark is planning and will be able to pack at least a few extra supplies along with us.

Those of you who remember our friends Cecilia Mendiola and Antonio Brack who celebrated Earth Day with us will be happy to know that they are now in Quito, Ecuador where Antonio has a new job with the United Nations working to preserve the Amazon and its indigenous peoples. Cecilia is planning to join us on our ecotour to Honduras so we are happily looking forward to seeing her again. Their new address is: Pasaje D-50 Carbajal, Quito, Ecuador. I know she would appreciate your letters and good wishes. They were both very sad to leave Peru and hope to return after a year or so.

NOMINATION COMMITTEE by Marcia Bonta

The Nomination Committee, which consists of Colette Heller, Paula Ford, and Marcia Bonta, is busily contacting members for help to run our organization. Several committee chairmanships will be open. We also need a president and a secretary. While we have some people in mind, it is impossible to know everyone who might be interested in contributing their time and abilities to JVAS. We are totally open to new members as well as oldtimers who would like to join those of us who have been on the board for many years. The more members who participate with their ideas and willingness to move them ahead, the stronger and more diverse our organization will be.

While I recognize that all of us are very busy and involved in work, family, church and other activities, I don't believe I'm exaggerating when I say that if the environment is destroyed, we will be destroyed too. And with the rapid thinning of the ozone layer -- faster than any scientist could have dreamed of -- the swift loss of biodiversity all over the globe and with it the ability to find cures for diseases, a 71 percent decline in neotropical migratory birds between 1978 and 1987, the continual poisoning and pollution of our groundwater, the air we breathe, and even the Great Lakes and the oceans, we will be leaving a horrendous legacy for our grandchildren to cope with if they do survive.

There is no doubt that without efforts at the grassroots level by ordinary citizens concerned with local, state, national and international environmental issues, we have little or no chance to change conditions. But, I have read too many heartening stories from all over the world about people who do care and have made a difference to be totally discouraged. Please, be part of that effort. Volunteer to help us in any way you can. Give us your names if you are interested in, for instance, being part of a telephone tree or letter-writing campaigns on local, state, national and international environmental issues. Give us your ideas of what you like and don't like about our organization and suggestions you have for improvements. WE NEED ALL OF YOU TO HELP AND TO CARE.

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK by Dave Kyler

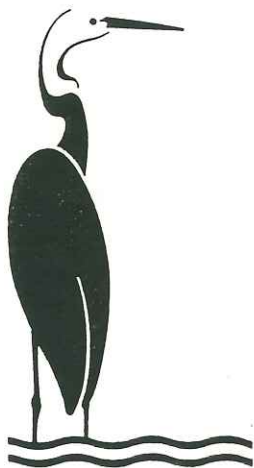
JAFFA SPORTS SHOW: We would like to express our heartfelt thanks to the following JVAS members who helped make our booth at the show a success: Melvin Lane, Pauline Lane, Fran Burgoon, Alice Goodlin, Janet Huber, Gene Zielinski, Julie Wehrle, Barb Baird, Bill King, Janine King, Billy King, Dick and Nona Weicht, Paula Ford, and Jes Cameron. A special thanks to Amy King, who spent the entire three days at the JAFFA working on "our" raffle bird quilt! Please call me at 643-6030 or Bill King at 942-7673 for raffle tickets. We still have a long way to go!

The annual JVAS banquet will be held on the 28th of April 1992 (Tuesday) at the 5th Avenue Methodist Church (where our regular meetings are now held). The meal will be a turkey dinner with all the trimmings. Cost will be \$8.50/person. Please call Amy King (942-7673) or Colette Heller (742-7481) if you need any more information. SEND IN YOUR RESERVATION BELOW!

Please reserve _____ place(s) for me at the annual JVAS banquet on April 28th. At \$8.50 per person I enclose a check for the amount of \$ _____.

NAME _____ PHONE _____
ADDRESS _____

PLEASE MAIL YOUR RESERVATIONS BY APRIL 15th TO Amy King
3021 West Chestnut Avenue
Altoona, PA 16601



STRONG WETLANDS BILL INTRODUCED

Unites States Representative Don Edwards introduced H.R. 4255, titled the Wetlands Reform Act of 1992 on February 19th. The National Audubon Society played a key role in drafting this bill, which is designed to strengthen federal protections for wetlands while addressing complaints of regulatory uncertainty and delays which have been leveled against current wetlands regulations. H.R. 4255 would also delay the implementation of the Administration's politically motivated "delineation manual," which would remove a minimum of 50% of the nation's wetlands from federal protection, pending completion of a study by the National Academy of Sciences. H.R. 4255 is the first wetlands bill to present a viable and comprehensive alternative to the environmentally disastrous policies proposed in the Bush Administration's delineation manual. NOW IS THE TIME TO WRITE TO YOUR U.S. HOUSE MEMBER AND URGE HIM OR HER TO SUPPORT WETLANDS PROTECTION BY COSPONSORING H.R. 4255.

THE DEADLINE FOR ARTICLES FOR THE APRIL GNATCATCHER IS APRIL 12th. Please submit articles to the editor, Stan Kotala, R.D. 3 Box 866, Altoona, PA 16601.

JUNIATA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY

P. O. Box 2378

Altoona, PA 16603

Non-Profit Org.

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THE LOWER TRAIL

The "Lower Trail" is owned by Rails-to-Trails, Inc of Blair County.

At present, the "Lower Trail" is a primitive trail, but can be easily hiked and many portions biked. The approximate length from Williamsburg to the Alfarata area, near Alexandria, is 11 miles. Mt. Etna is the approximate mid-point.

The Lower Trail has historic roots. Initially, portions of the Trail served the American Indian as the Kittanning Trail and later portions became known as the Frankstown Road. In 1832, the Juniata canal, linking Harrisburg and Hollidaysburg, was opened as part of the Pennsylvania Main Line Canal. The canal followed the Frankstown Branch of the Juniata River, making it an ideal canal location. Remnants of the Canal Locks remain along the Lower Trail, and can be seen in the area marked as point "A" on the map. The canals became obsolete as railroads became more efficient and by the early 1890's, the Pennsylvania Railroad (PRR) had taken-over nearly all the traffic and replaced the canal. This particular section became known as the Petersburg Branch of the PRR.

Industry soon sprang up along this corridor because of established transportation and the abundance of natural resources. The abundance of iron ore resulted in the development of many smelting furnaces. The most complete remains of this furnace community exists at Mt. Etna located at point "B" on the map. An Iron Master's residence can be seen in this area also. Closely related to the iron industry was the limestone industry which provided the fluxing agent to purify iron ore. Many large quarries remain along the Trail as evidence of this previously thriving industry.

The Petersburg Branch of the PRR remained active until 1979 and the rail line was formally abandoned in 1982.

In March 1991, Rails-to-Trails of Blair County, Inc., purchased this section of the abandoned Petersburg Branch from the Penn Central Corporation. The purchase was made possible by a generous donation by Attorney T. Dean Lower, in memory of his wife, Jane Y. and son Roger D. Lower.

As is noted on the map, the bridges at the Mt. Etna area are not traversable, either because of planking or ownership. Trail users can, however, bypass these bridges by using State Route 2017 for approximately .8 mile at this point.

The "Lower Trail" is indicated as ~~XXXXXXX~~ on the map. Present access points with parking are marked as * on the map; with limited parking as # and with no parking as @.

Please use the trail for NON Motorized recreation only. We ask you to refrain from alcoholic drinking, and of course, please do not litter - whatever you take in on the trail with you - TAKE OUT with you.

Rails-to-Trails of Blair County, Inc., invites you to volunteer your Time, Talents, Resources, money --- WE NEED YOU !!!!

Rails-to-Trails of Blair County, Inc.,
P.O. Box 592
Hollidaysburg, PA 16643

Lower Trail Project Management Office
221 High Street
Williamsburg, PA 16693
(814) 832-2400

To
Tyrone

THE LOWER TRAIL

A Trailhead is planned for the Alfarata area on State Route 4014 between Waterstreet and Alexandria

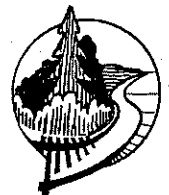
The Trail distance from Waterstreet to the first Bridge at Mt. Etna is 4.8 Miles.

Note: The Bridges at the Mt. Etna area are not traversable, either because of planking or ownership. Trail users can bypass these bridges by using State Route #2017 (Approx .8 Mile) See sketch map at upper left.

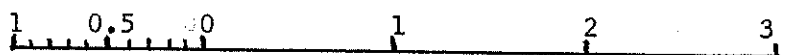
To
Huntingdon

RAILS-TO-TRAILS, INC
of Blair County
P.O. Box 592
Hollidaysburg, PA 16648

LOWER TRAIL Project Office
221 High Street
Williamsburg, PA 16693
Phone (814) 832-2400

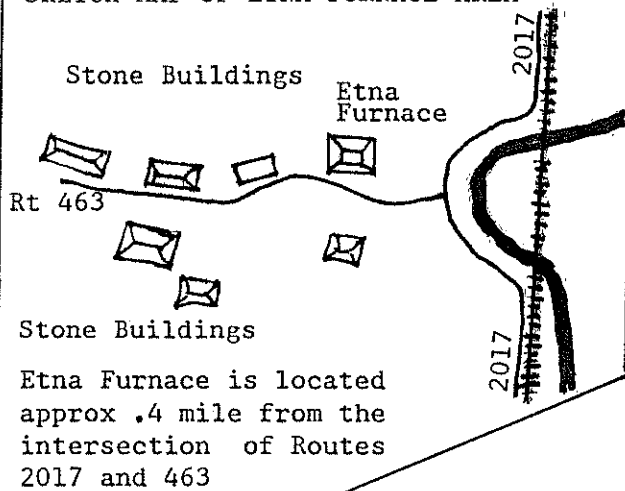


A Trailhead is planned for Williamsburg



Map Scale 1" = 1 Mile

SKETCH MAP OF ETNA FURNACE AREA

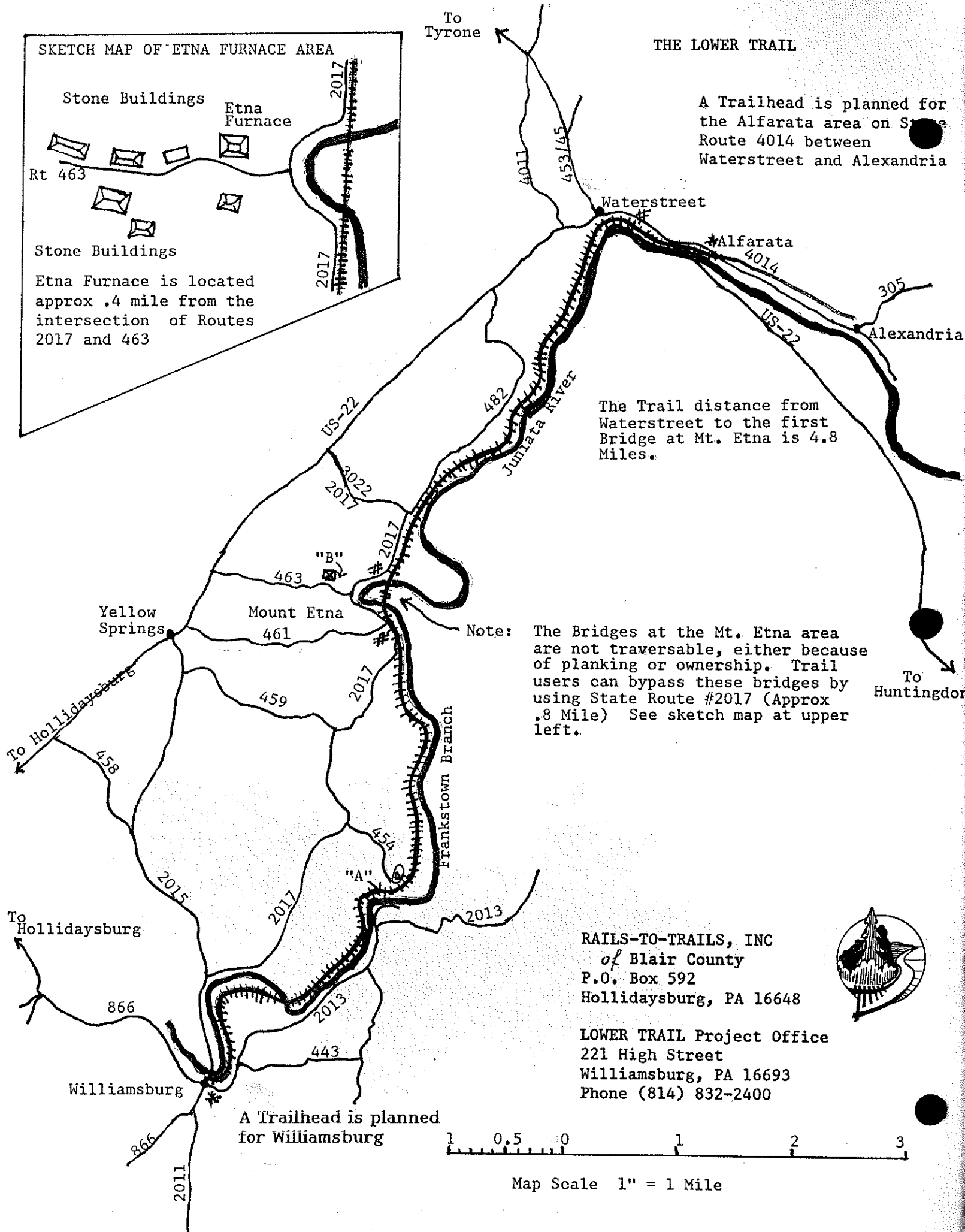


Yellow Springs

Mount Etna
461

To
Hollidaysburg

Williamsburg





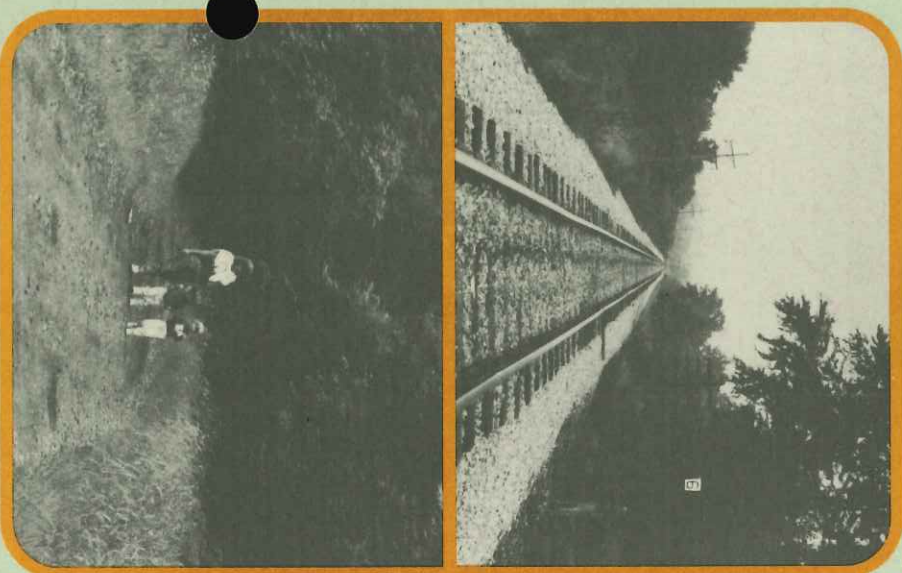
P.O. Box 592
Hollidaysburg, PA 16648

RAILS-TO-TRAILS OF BLAIR COUNTY, INC.

STAMP



Rails to Trails



Photos: Mary Emeigh

"America now numbers among its many wonderful artificial lines of communications, a mountain railway which in boldness of design and difficulty of execution, I can compare to no modern work I have ever seen, excepting perhaps the passes of the Simplon and Monte Ceni in Sardinia; but even these remarkable passes viewed as engineering works did not strike me as being more wonderful than the Allegheny Railway in the United States."

David Stevenson

19th Century English Civil Engineer

From Rails . . .

The history of Blair County lies along its railroad and canal beds, marking forever the importance of transportation to the region.

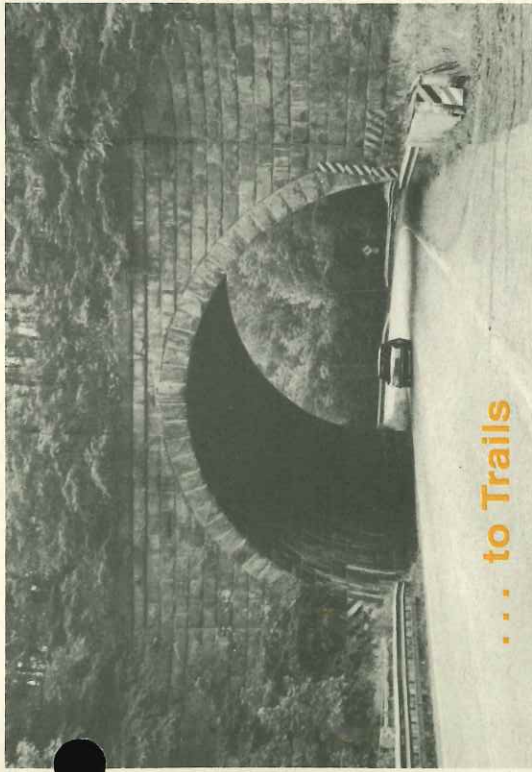
In the early 1900's, the Pennsylvania Canal . . . known as the "Continuous Waterway" . . . linked Philadelphia and Pittsburgh through the construction of the Allegheny Portage Railroad, an engineering marvel that hauled canal boats loaded on flatcars over the Allegheny Mountains.

The canals became obsolete as railroads became more efficient. The Iron Horses could get freight and passengers through when low water in summer and ice jams in winter would halt canal traffic.

By the late 1800's, the Pennsylvania Railroad had taken over nearly all the traffic from the canal and the portage incline. By 1930, the P.R.R. handled more traffic in one day than the former Allegheny Portage Railroad handled in a year.

As the Railroad grew in importance, so did Blair County. Banks, newspapers, hotels, hospitals, theatres, churches and schools followed the growth of the P.R.R. meeting the needs of the thousands of families of men who answered the shop whistle every day.

The vitality of those days, when railroading was at its peak, is just a memory now. But it's a memory worth keeping.



Keeping the memory alive is the goal of Rails to Trails. This growing group of local residents is dedicated to the preservation of our Railroad Heritage through the conversion of abandoned railroad rights-of-way into public recreational trails.

At the heights of the railroad operations, there were 15,000 miles of track in Pennsylvania. Today more than 9,000 have been abandoned. While we suffer the loss of those lines, we recognize the opportunity those abandonments provide to create "living museums" of our natural heritage.

The President's Commission on Americans Outdoors has endorsed Rails to Trails: it fills the need of providing outdoor recreation that is close to home. Across the nation, Rail trails are being used for hiking, biking, cross-country skiing, horseback riding, bird watching and photography — in fact, any non-motorized recreational activity. Since our railroads were built on no more than a 4% grade, these abandoned railbeds provide safe family recreation for all — children, the elderly or the disabled. How rewarding it would be to spend a day outdoors with family and friends, while experiencing our past!

Rails-to-Trails provides:

- Safe, convenient and tranquil non-motorized recreation.
- An outdoor resource for people of all ages and physical abilities to enhance their health, well-being and quality of life.
- A way to maintain and preserve the historical significance of our railroading past, from the land it transverses to the structures on or along them.
- A way to enhance the economic value of adjoining properties and communities in a non-polluting manner that will benefit future generations.
- Open space for nature interpretation, wildlife breeding and conservation areas.

*Help Rails-to-Trails
bring life back to our abandoned rail
corridors throughout all of Central
Pennsylvania by creating Rail Trails
for all to use!*

Here in Central Pennsylvania where the roots of our railroad heritage run so deep, it is imperative that we think ahead to preserve these corridors before they're gone forever — carved up and sold piecemeal. Rails to Trails of Blair County, Inc. needs your help as a member or supporter before the remnants of our heritage are to be found only in faded pictures and dusty books.

Rails-to-Trails of Blair County, Inc.

