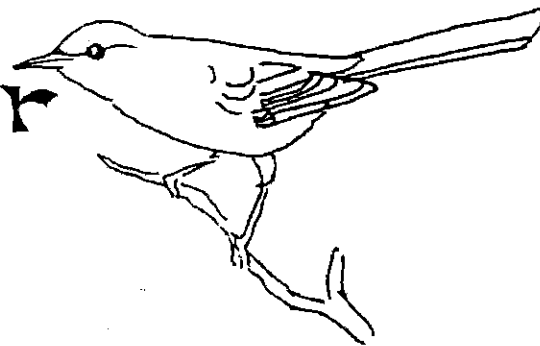


The Gnatcatcher



Newsletter of the Juniata Valley Audubon Society

P.O. Box 32, Tyrone, Pennsylvania 16686

Vol. 34, No. 2 — March 2002

JVAS 'Adopts' Second Important Bird Area: The Frankstown Branch of the Juniata River

By Dave Kyler

Every winter, as the days lengthen and the seasons begin to change, my thoughts turn to one of nature's many avian miracles — the spring Neotropical bird migration. Every year millions of brightly colored birds of many different species pass through Pennsylvania's woods, either to breed or just to rest and feed in preparation for their continued journey north.

Within Pennsylvania there are currently 77 places that are recognized by the Ornithological Technical Committee of the Pennsylvania Biological Survey as having critical bird habitat. Juniata Valley Audubon is fortunate to have at least two of these Important Bird Areas (IBAs) in their membership coverage area. In the last issue of *The Gnatcatcher*, Dr. Stan Kotala described the first: The Canoe Creek Watershed IBA. In this issue we'll take a look at the second: The Frankstown Branch of the Juniata River IBA.

The Frankstown Branch of the Juniata River IBA encompasses approximately 5,000 acres of public (State Game Lands 118) and private lands, in both Huntingdon and Blair Counties. The site is an outstanding example of Ridge and Valley riparian forest. The combination of steep, wooded slopes; floodplain; and high moisture allow for diverse understory growth. The site includes the entire 11-mile length of the Lower (rhymes with Power) Rails-to-Trails route. To the west the site boundary is a low

[Cont'd on page 3]

— March Program —

"NORTHERN SAW-WHET OWL BANDING PROGRAM." Jennifer Brackbill, of the Shaver's Creek Environmental Center, will present information on the international banding program for northern saw-whet owls: Why saw-whets are being monitored, how they are captured and banded, and their natural history. Photos will be shown of some of the owls that have been banded at the Center.

7 P.M., Tuesday, Mar. 19 in the chapel at Alto-Reste Park, on Plank Rd., Altoona — directly across from Wal-Mart.

— Annual JVAS Spring Banquet —

Tuesday, April 16
Trinity United Methodist Church
533 Main St., Ballwood

\$12 per JVAS member; \$15 per nonmember
(Mail enclosed reservation form by April 11)

6 P.M. — Social hour 6:30 P.M. — Dinner

Program by Charles Fergus

**"NATURAL PENNSYLVANIA : EXPLORING THE STATE FOREST
NATURAL AREAS"**
(See box on page 5)

— Next Board Meeting —

Juniata Valley Audubon board members will meet at 7 P.M. at Alto-Reste Park on Tuesday, Apr. 2. All Juniata Valley Audubon members are welcome. For directions, phone 684-7376 or send an e-mail message to <charma@nb.net>.

The Gnatcatcher

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JUNIATA VALLEY AUDUBON
Charlie Hoyer, Editor
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Juniata Valley Audubon is a chapter of the National Audubon Society, serving members in all of Blair and Bedford Counties, and portions of Cambria, Centre, Clearfield, Fulton, and Huntingdon Counties.

Program meetings are held temporarily in the chapel at Alto-Reste Park, Plank Road, Altoona (directly across from Wal-Mart) on the third Tuesday of the month in February, March, May, September, October, and November at 7 P.M. The public is invited to attend.

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From the Gnatcatcher's Nest

Last year Dan Brauning, Doug Gross, Jerry McWilliams, and Steve Hoffman teamed up to offer a series of all-day bird ID workshops for intermediate/advanced birders. The workshops were designed to improve the participants' birding skills (both visual and auditory), as well as introduce concepts and methods for conducting baseline bird inventories and long-term monitoring of breeding populations. One of the workshops was held at the nearby Shaver's Creek Environmental Center, which a few JVASers and I had attended. The training sessions were super!

For those who missed out last year, the same basic workshop is being offered on April 6 at the Benjamin Olewine III Nature Center at Wildwood Lake, in Harrisburg, and on April 13 at the John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge at Tinicum, near Philadelphia. They are sponsored by Audubon Pennsylvania, the Wild Resource Conservation Fund, and the Pennsylvania Game Commission.

I have brochures containing a program overview and a registration form. Phone me at 684-7376 or contact me via e-mail and I'll send you one. Last year all three workshops were completely filled (45-50 birders attended each one), so don't delay, sign up now!

— Charlie

If you're reading this newsletter but are not an Audubon member, you're invited to join by mailing the coupon to:

Juniata Valley Audubon Society
Alice Goodlin, Membership Chair
R.R. 3, Box 127
Altoona, PA 16601-9207

You'll receive the bimonthly *Audubon* magazine, each one filled with superb nature photography and in-depth reporting on environmental issues. You'll also receive Juniata Valley Audubon's newsletter, *The Gnatcatcher*, containing articles on local conservation topics and nature themes.



AUDUBON Membership Application

- YES, I want to join the Juniata Valley Audubon Society and the National Audubon Society at the special Introductory Rate of \$20.
- As a senior citizen or student, I'm eligible to join for only \$15.

My \$_____ check, payable to Audubon, is enclosed.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ PA _____

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CONSERVATION

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R

By Mark Henry

**We Are Getting Closer —
Please Call Again!**

Having just returned from the annual meeting of the National Wildlife Federation, I heard some good and bad news regarding the protection of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge from oil drilling.

The good news is that a couple of senators, one from Ohio and one from Nebraska, have announced that they will oppose oil drilling in the Refuge.

The bad news is that Senator Arlen Specter has still not taken a position despite many requests that he oppose the drilling. Therefore, once again, I'm asking Juniata Valley Audubon members to call Senator Specter's office and voice their opposition to oil drilling in the Arctic Refuge. His phone number is (202) 225-4254.

I know that many of you already have called and/or written the senator and urged him to oppose the drilling so why, you may ask, should you call again? Well, I would offer two reasons. First, the "tide" appears to be starting to turn against drilling, especially with the recent announcement of the two senators mentioned above. Second, at the NWF meeting, I received more information about the impacts and potential impacts of drilling on migratory birds — birds that we all care about.

The information includes the fact that some 180 bird species have been recorded in the Arctic Refuge of which about 70 species are regular nesters. These include dunlin, tundra swan, American golden-plover, snow goose and such rarities as bluethroat and yellow wagtail. Further, one study in the Prudhoe Bay, where oil drilling is presently reported, an estimated 5 to 18 percent reduction occurs in shore-bird nesting within the perimeter of the Bay field. And oil fields inevitably introduce contaminants into the air and water that can have devastating effects on birds.

Other negative impacts include direct destruction of habitat where the oil fields are located, small oil spills (which happens in the Prudhoe Bay area) that

are detrimental to birds, and human disturbance of migratory staging areas (such as areas for snow geese) resulting in the birds being less fit for migration.

Thus, to answer the question, why should you call Senator Specter again? Do it for the birds. The birds can't call, so it's up to us to call for them. This "battle" can be won, and we are getting closer all the time. Please take the time to call again. Thanks. ☞

... FBJR IBA [*Cont'd from page 1*]

leading ridge, and to the east the site boundary is the ridgeline of Tussey Mountain. To the north is a narrow valley with little human disturbance, and to the south the riparian valley has some agriculture and human habitation.

The site hosts an impressive concentration of breeding riparian species. During the 1995 Lower Trail Special Areas Project (SAP) a total of 115 species were identified in this riparian corridor as confirmed or potential breeders. (A second 2002 Lower Trail SAP is currently being conducted with the help of Juniata Valley Audubon members.)

Breeding bird tallies of up to 200 per hour have been recorded during May and June along the Lower Trail. Species present at high breeding concentrations include blue-gray gnatcatcher, eastern wood-pewee, Acadian flycatcher, warbling vireo, red-eyed vireo, rose-breasted grosbeak, wood thrush, yellow warbler, American redstart, Louisiana waterthrush, cerulean warbler, and Baltimore oriole.

Other breeding species include wood duck, least flycatcher, yellow-throated vireo, northern parula, yellow-throated warbler, worm-eating warbler, and orchard oriole.

In addition to breeding species, the number of Neotropical migrants using this corridor during spring migration is unusually high when compared with nearby areas. This is due primarily to the southwest-to-northeast river orientation and to earlier-than-usual leaf-out. The site also hosts one of Pennsylvania's most important cerulean warbler breeding areas. Surveys in 1998 and in 2001 found

36 and 43 territorial male cerulean warblers, respectively, along this riparian route.

Many thanks go to the following JVAS members who have helped with the previous SAP or are now helping with the current one: Bill King, Trudy Kyler, Greg Grove, Stan Kotala, Bruce and Marcia Bonta, Charlie and Marge Hoyer, Jesse Perry, and Gene Zielinski.

If anyone would like to participate in bird censusing on the Lower Trail this year, please phone me at 643-6030. ❖

Important Mammal Area Project Launched

Following the lead of Pennsylvania Audubon's Important Bird Area Initiative, the Mammals Technical Committee of the Pennsylvania Biological Survey has instituted the Important Mammal Area Project. It seeks to identify sites important to mammal conservation in the Keystone State.

To be designated as an Important Mammal Area (IMA), a site must meet one or more of the following criteria:

- Supports diverse or unique mammalian communities.
- Supports a high-density mammalian population.
- Supports mammals listed by the Pennsylvania Biological Survey as endangered or threatened.
- Supports mammals listed as candidate species by the Pennsylvania Biological Survey or mammals that are declining or vulnerable nationally.
- Is important for public education regarding mammals.

After the sites are identified as IMAs, they will be the focus of conservation initiatives. The Important Bird Areas program has proven to be a powerful tool for avian conservation in the Commonwealth and the IMAP will do the same for mammals.

Juniata Valley Audubon already has nominated the 15,000-acre Canoe Creek Watershed as an Important Mammal Area. The site meets all five of the designated criteria. If the Pennsylvania Biological

Survey declares the Canoe Creek Watershed to be an IMA, it will compound the importance of the conservation of this locale, which already has been designated an Important Bird Area.

If you know of any other sites that may qualify as IMAs, please contact me at (814) 946-8840. Thanks for your help! ❖

— Dr. Stan Kotala

River Otters Return to Raystown

On February 19, 2002, I traveled with my father to the Raystown Branch of the Juniata River south of Hopewell to witness a river otter release. It was a mild day, with patches of sunshine. We arrived at the release site to find a crowd and caged otters ready for release.

We followed everyone down to the riverbank. The first two otters came out immediately. They swam to the other side of the river, inspecting their new environment. The male and female otters climbed up a steep bank with plenty of rocks on the other side of the stream. The crowd watched in anticipation to see what the otters would do next. They kept climbing. Finally, the otters began to play near a boulder.

Then, some Game Commission officers called a few people to help with the release of the rest of the otters. I went down to the small, rocky peninsula where the cage was waiting. I pulled the door away from the cage. This otter was reluctant to emerge. Finally, it did along with the other otter in the cage.

After that, it was time to leave. I had a good day releasing otters. ❖

— Helena Kotala

Tree Swallows — Not Tree Sparrows

Kelly Baronner, Blair County Coordinator for the Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania, pointed out that I made a typographical error in her "Hints for Successful Bluebirding" in the last issue of The Gnatcatcher. Her reference to *tree sparrows* should have read *tree swallows*. ❖

— Ed.

Win a Birdwatcher's Adventure!

How'd you like to spend a week viewing migrating birds on the Eastern Shore of Maryland during a stay in a fully furnished, three-bedroom townhouse? Imagine visiting birding hot spots including Assateague Island National Seashore, Blackwater and Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuges, Kiptopeake State Park, Va., and Cape May, N.J. (via the Lewes Ferry).

Can you picture yourself spotting pelicans, ospreys, and thousands of swallows and wading birds while strolling along the beach? How about checking peregrine falcon, merlin, and bald eagle off of your life list as you canoe the vast coastal marshes of Sinepuxet Bay? If canoeing sounds too ambitious, you could simply look out your bedroom balcony or living room deck and identify gulls and waterfowl in the bay waters while you sip your morning coffee. Take a rainy day visit to the Ward Museum of Wildfowl Art in Salisbury, the largest display of decorative and working bird carvings in the world — some of which are amazingly realistic. If you want to take a break from birding, you could check out the historic tours, fairs and cultural events, outlet shopping, or waterfront restaurants.

If all of this appeals to you, then you must participate in the JVAS Birdwatchers Adventure Raffle. For a \$5 "donation" (three tickets for \$12), you'll receive a chance for a seven-day, rent-free stay at the Gullway Townhouses, in Ocean City, Md. This generous first-prize is donated by Mrs. Lucille Donelan.

The townhouse features three bedrooms, two baths, kitchen, living room, dining room, carport, and boat dock. It's fully furnished and usually rents for \$500 to \$800 per week. It will be available for the winner this spring until May 10 or in the fall.

Second prize: A beautiful, 12×14 framed, prize-winning photograph of a wet screech-owl by Ken Steele, of Ken's Art in Nature, Martinsburg, donated by Ken.

Third prize: Book, *The Sibley Guide to Bird Life & Behavior*, list \$45, donated by Charlie Hoyer.

Fourth prize: Book, *The Sibley Guide to Birds*,

Annual JVAS Spring Banquet

Tuesday, April 16
Trinity United Methodist Church
533 Main St., Bellwood

\$12 per JVAS member
\$15 per nonmember

6 P.M. — Social hour

6:30 P.M. — Delicious family-style roast beef and turkey dinner with all the trimmings

— Program by Charles Fergus —

"Natural Pennsylvania : Exploring the State Forest Natural Areas"

Throughout the Pennsylvania state forest system there are 61 officially designated Natural Areas, each offering a bit of wildness deemed worthy of protection: Rare-bird breeding sites, stands of old-growth trees, fragile wetlands, ice-age remnants, mineral-rich mountainsides. To experience first-hand the unique features of each natural area, nature writer Charles Fergus spent a year visiting all 61. Chuck will report on what he found, offering a guided tour of some of the state's most distinctive natural places. He also will talk on how to visit the areas, each of which is open to the public.

list \$35, donated by Audubon Pennsylvania.

Fifth prize: Book, *The Sibley Guide to Birds*, list \$35, donated by Audubon Pennsylvania.

The drawing will be held at the JVAS Spring Banquet, April 16 (*see box*). This raffle will be the major fund-raising activity for the JVAS, since the BiLo/Riverside Markets cash register receipts program has been discontinued.

To enter, send your ticket(s) along with a check, payable to JVAS, to Juniata Valley Audubon, P.O. Box 32, Tyrone, PA 18886-0032. You may feel free to photocopy the tickets and sell as many as you like. "Speculators" need not be present to win. Of course, all entries must be received by April 16. Tickets also will be on sale at the banquet.

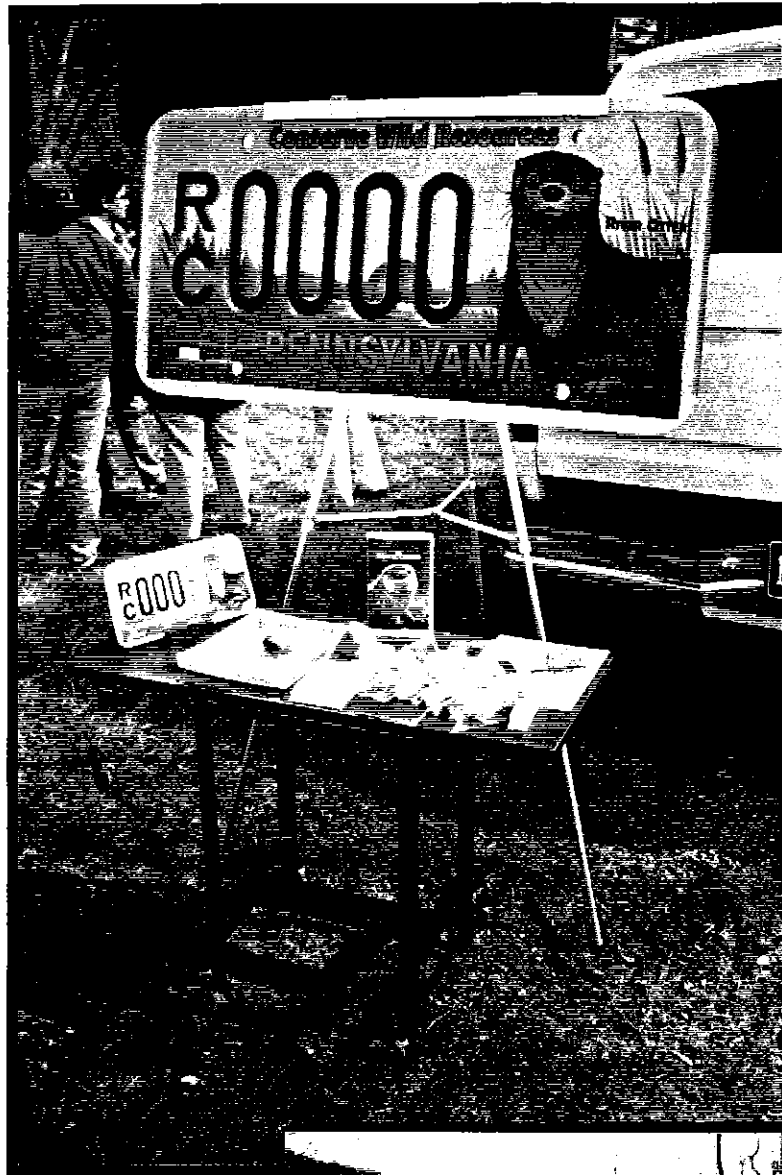
All monies received will go directly to the JVAS treasury. For more information, contact Education Chair Jody Wallace at 684-2425. ☿

River Otters Reintroduced To Raystown Branch

FEBRUARY 19, 2002

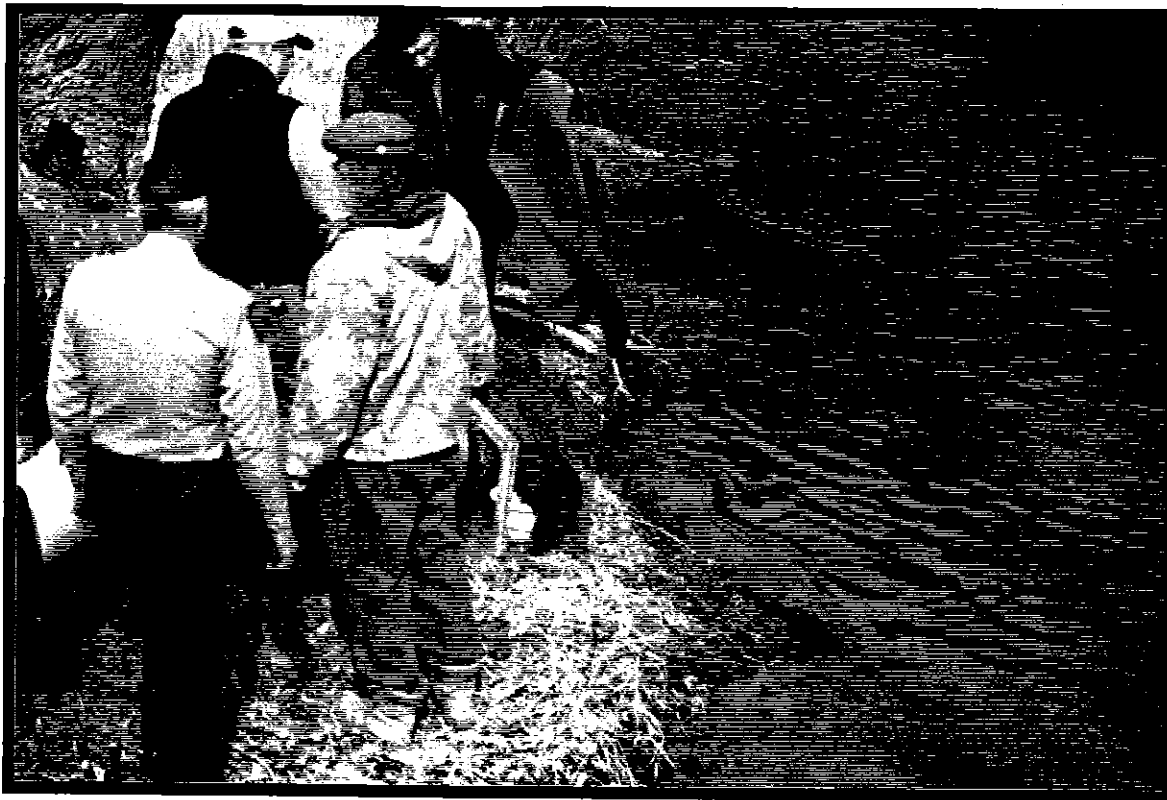
Text and photos by
Dr. Stan Kotala

Having been nearly extirpated from Pennsylvania as a result of deforestation and water pollution, the river otter has made a dramatic comeback over the last decade thanks to the restoration efforts of the Pennsylvania Game Commission and the Wild Resource Conservation Fund. This reintroduction will assure that river otters will be seen in the streams of the Juniata Valley as well as on our license plates! More than 40 otters will be released in the Upper Juniata Watershed over the next year.



Dr. Tom Serfass,
director of the
reintroduction program,
addresses a crowd of
more than 100 at one
of the reintroduction
sites — the Jesse
Greenawalt Farm,
south of Hopewell,
Bedford County.





The seven river otters were transported in large cylinders with attached cages. Here Southcentral Game Commission Information and Education Supervisor Don Garner removes a blanket from one of the cages as the otter inspects the streambank.



After being released, some of the river otters stayed in the stream while others sought shelter among the shale outcroppings on the opposite side of the river. Such crevices will serve as dens for the otters.

Penn State Researcher's Mission: To Preserve Biodiversity

"Our survival depends on the web of life created by the interactions of the millions of different animals, plants, fungi, and other microscopic organisms that share the Earth with us. All of these species together make up our natural heritage, which we call biological diversity or 'biodiversity.' Because of human activities that pollute or destroy natural habitats, we are losing species at an alarming rate. For the sake of both present and future generations, we must protect biodiversity in Pennsylvania, the nation, and the world," explains K.C. Kim in his most recent publication, *Biodiversity, Our Living World: Your Life Depends On It!*

This publication is the latest effort in Kim's mission to preserve biodiversity and educate the public about the importance of biodiversity. "One of the areas that I am concerned with is the public perception of biodiversity," says Kim. He created this publication with the objective of educating the public about biodiversity, and instead of following a typical textbook style of writing, Kim took a unique approach and related daily life activities to biodiversity issues at large. This new concept, referred to as a biodiversity account, examines the immense number of species needed to support everyday activities. Kim relates, "The exact number of species is irrelevant — I simply want people to realize that everything they do involves biodiversity in a major way. For example, the biodiversity account for deer hunting may involve thousands of species, and the biodiversity account for eating a dinner may involve 600–700 species — that is the approach.

I think this publication will give the public a very broad, holistic view of the world and show them how all species are linked together and help them to see that food just does not come from refrigerators or restaurants. If the publication is successful, it could be a major outreach effort by Penn State and the biodiversity community at large."

As an entomologist, Kim recognizes the importance of invertebrates in maintaining and supporting the Earth's ecosystems. "We usually ignore or put in a black box the invertebrates or anything

small — my notion is that the small organisms move the system — not the large ones. No matter how many large animals you try to save, if you do not have the small invertebrates, the larger species cannot exist."

Invertebrates play a vital role in nutrient cycling and pollination, and also are a source for many animals. Kim explains that our problem is a lack of knowledge. Many take for granted that we have a thorough understanding of the Earth's species, but out of more than an estimated 10 million species worldwide, we have identified barely 17 percent. Lower plants and invertebrates make up the largest groups of unidentified species, and Kim cautions that these organisms are disappearing rapidly before we even have the chance to know about them. Kim believes it is important to gather as much baseline information on invertebrate populations as possible because inventorying provides the data that can be used to monitor the changes occurring within the ecosystems.

As such, another one of his recent projects was to help initiate the Pennsylvania Biodiversity Project. The project was launched in November 2000 with the purpose of exploring, describing, and assessing invertebrate biodiversity in Pennsylvania.

Kim is enthusiastic about preserving Pennsylvania's biodiversity, and has many ideas that are still in the planning stage. Some recent proposals consist of plans for inventorying biodiversity in state public lands, including both state forests and state parks. Another idea is to create biodiversity corridors that connect state parks with municipal parks through the state Greenways Program. Kim wants to capture the public's attention and get them interested in biodiversity by providing information about local areas. "In talking about tropical forests, many and exotic animals is important, but I want to relate biodiversity to our everyday surroundings so that when people participate in conservation activities, they can see how it affects them locally," says Kim.

Kim explains, "I'm not an extremist in a sense

[*Cont'd on page 10*]

PennDOT: Give 'Em an Inch and They'll Take . . . a State Forest?!

By Dave Bonta and Greg Grove

A year ago, the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) shocked local nature lovers when it unveiled some sketches for new highways that would cut through the Rothrock State Forest. These sketches — part of a project called the South Central Centre County Transportation Study, or SCCCTS — were further refined and released for public examination at a meeting with the Community Advisory Committee (CAC) this past February.

None of these sketches is available for general circulation, so we can't reprint them here. (Too much knowledge, apparently, is a dangerous thing.) They may, however, be viewed at the SCCCTS office, open weekdays 9-4, at 103 Innovation Blvd., State College. That's right next to the Penn Stater, if you can make it past the maze of new highway construction to get there.

Basically, PennDOT is hoping to avoid the public relations gridlock it faced with I-99 by launching a preemptive strike. As the Centre Region continues to succumb to so-called "growth," traffic on existing roads such as Rts. 322, 45, and 144 may become too slow and dangerous. Increasing levels of commuter traffic will mesh poorly with through traffic (20% of it trucks), lured by the attractive alternative to I-76 presented by an already upgraded Rt. 322. Where will it end? Not in the Thickhead Wild Area, if we tree-huggers have anything to say about it!

As of this writing, two to three dozen alternate routes for 322 and 144 are being studied. Many of these alternatives involve new roadway that would consume hundreds if not thousands of acres of forested, agricultural, or rural residential land. In other words, excellent or at least good wildlife habitat.

Several of these routes cut through the heart of Rothrock State Forest in the region where Centre, Huntingdon, and Mifflin counties adjoin. Rothrock is a largely unfragmented forest of approximately 100,000 acres. Although some logging occurs, the forest as a whole has been recovering and maturing

quite well from the orgy of timbering in the 19th century.

Embedded within Rothrock is the Thickhead Wild Area, a mostly high-elevation area in which little "management" occurs. Much of Thickhead is typical eastern deciduous forest, with an abundance of red-eyed vireos, ovenbirds, and scarlet tanagers.

Within the 5,000+ acres of Thickhead Wild Area are four designated Natural Areas. Three of these contain flora and fauna characteristic of more northerly regions. Bear Meadows Natural Area is an 800-acre bog in a high, cold valley. Although not formed by glacial action, the bog is ecologically similar to northern glacier-formed bogs. Alder flycatchers, golden-crowned kinglets, Canada and black-throated blue warblers, northern waterthrush, and swamp sparrows are breeding species at Bear Meadows. The bog is ringed by a fringe of ancient forest, including the southernmost population of black spruce in the U.S. — essential to preserving the genetic diversity of this species.

Two other Natural Areas in the immediate vicinity — Detweiler Run and Alan Seeger — include more extensive patches of old-growth forest. These "cathedral groves" of tall hemlock and white pine, with dense rhododendron and hemlock understories, feature northern breeding birds uncommon this far south and away from the Allegheny plateau, including magnolia, Blackburnian, black-throated blue, and Canada warblers. Both Natural Areas also contain small patches of old-growth hardwood forest, and a tract outside Detweiler Run (still in the wild area) contains an additional fifty acres of old-growth, talus slope forest.

Big Flat Laurel Natural Area, a favorite local spot for viewing mountain laurel in bloom, straddles the flat top of the aptly named Thickhead Mountain at an elevation of 2,400 feet. It's essentially a heath barrens, with huckleberry and laurel thickets interspersed with semi-stunted patches of chestnut oak and conifers. Big Flat has a high density of breeding

common yellowthroats and eastern towhees; other breeders include chestnut-sided, yellow-rumped, and black-and-white warblers, as well as that most ethereal of singers, the hermit thrush.

As most JVAS members know, old-growth forests are hot spots of biodiversity, rich in such little-studied organisms as insects, lichens, and fungi. And intact forests the size of Rothrock are becoming an increasingly rare resource, invaluable as refuges for some of our more particular neighbors, including many reptiles, amphibians, and mammals, as well as the many Neotropical migrants that can't breed elsewhere. Species that, while they may not be endangered yet, may soon join the Indiana bat and Allegheny wood rat as "species of special concern" if sprawl and highway building continue to ravage the landscape at their present rate:

It boggles the mind that such schemes as a 322 bypass side-swiping Bear Meadows, Detweiler Run, and the equally remote Penn Roosevelt State Park in one fell swoop can be taken seriously, let alone studied and drawn up by engineers at taxpayers' expense. This, at a time when the Wild Resource Conservation Fund is going begging!

It is, of course, entirely possible that PennDOT will stay out of Rothrock altogether. In April SCCCTS and PennDOT will meet behind closed doors with the CAC to try to whittle down the list to a half-dozen or so preferred alternatives.

Given this schedule, *now* is the time for concerned citizens to express their views to PennDOT, urging that a highway not be placed through Rothrock State Forest. An ad hoc coalition of local nature-oriented people has formed Friends of Rothrock, or FoR. ("FoR is *for the forest!*")

In a meeting last month, activists from Juniata Valley Audubon, the State College Bird Club, and other local conservationists and recreationists were able to reach a preliminary consensus: that, barring better evidence to the contrary, PennDOT should select the logical and simple option of keeping and improving the current alignment for Rt. 322.

For more information, or to join the e-mail list for Rothrock-related issues, contact Dave Bonta at <bontasaurus@yahoo.com>. ☿

Please consider sending a letter to your state representatives and sending copies to the following: Community Advisory Committee, c/o SCCCTS Project Office, 103 Innovation Blvd., Suite 216, State College, PA 16803. Or call (877) 7-SCCCTS and request that your comments be passed along to the committee.

Mr. George Khoury, District Engineer, PennDOT District 2, 1924-30 Daisy Street, P.O. Box 342, Clearfield, PA 16830. (814) 765-0410, Fax (814) 765-0424

Steve Fantechi, PennDOT District 2: same as above. (814) 765-0677

State Forester, Attn. Dan Devlin, Forest Resource Planning & Information, DCNR Bureau of Forestry, P.O. Box 8552, Harrisburg, PA 17105-8552. (He will advise PennDOT against the Rothrock alignments, but will greatly benefit from a thick stack of letters from concerned citizens.)

Jake Corman, State Senator (34th District), 218 West High St., Bellefonte, PA 16823. (814) 355-0477, Fax (814) 355-6046

Kerry A. Benninghoff, State Representative (171st District), 209 South Allegheny St., Suite B, Bellefonte, PA 16823. (814) 355-1300, Fax (814) 355-3523

... Biodiversity [*Cont'd from page 8*]

that my goal is biodiversity in a restrictive sense; we cannot ignore the fact that economic development will continue and development will continue. But considering all that, we must find a way to preserve biodiversity as much as we can because we are going to lose some species whether we like it or not. We must make sure that species are not lost to the point where whole ecosystems become endangered. We cannot allow that to happen.

"The publication *Biodiversity, Our Living World: Your Life Depends On It!* is available from the Publications Distribution Center, The Pennsylvania State University, 112 Agricultural Administration Building, University Park, PA 16802. For more information, phone 865-6713. ☿

— Summer 2001 issue of the newsletter of Penn State's Environmental Resources Research Institute

Looking for Spring

Now that the shutter-rattling winds of March are here, I wonder what happened to winter? For the most part, our winter consisted of an extension of late fall with now and then a dusting of snow or a day or two of winter cold. There were so many thaws in January and February, I stopped counting them. We had blooming dandelions in December and the twinkling, blue blossoms of common speedwell in January and February.

Hundreds of robins wintered on the mountain, a fox sparrow appeared for four days in mid-February at the feeder, and tundra swans were migrating by late February. For the first time in the thirty years we have lived here, our north-facing hollow road was free of ice and snow the entire winter.

But even though our winter was almost snow-less and unusually warm, the earth was still brown, the trees bare, the migrants gone, and the hibernators underground. So, as usual, the end of winter was a time to listen and look for signs of spring.

Sitting above Bird Count Trail one warm, late February day, I listened to chickadees “fee-beeing,” titmice “peter-petering,” and a Carolina wren loudly singing “tea-kettle, tea-kettle, tea-kettle.” A pileated woodpecker drummed and one dark-eyed junco trilled his spring song. Then I heard the cries of over a hundred Canada geese flying high and heading north in wavering V’s.

That same day the woods were filled with chasing chipmunks. As I walked back up our road, chipmunks zipped across it and up the slope. I sat down to watch at least ten of them as they rushed back and forth across the road or froze on a fallen tree or stopped to scrub their faces or squealed and chased off other chipmunks.

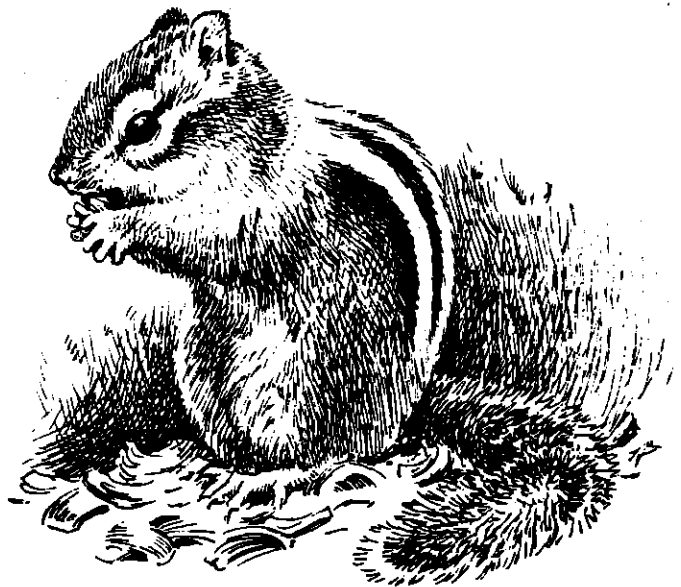
At first it was difficult to make sense of what I was watching because the chipmunks moved so fast. But I noticed that male chipmunks were tracking down a receptive female by sniffing along her path.

Time and again she fought off her pursuers. Then she disappeared into a burrow and three males dove into it after her.

Suddenly she emerged and there was more frantic chasing, squealing, and chirping. Once she leaped into the air, spun around, landed on her feet, and ran the opposite way to escape her pursuers.

I was watching what scientists call “mating bouts” when males chase a female in heat who outmaneuvers them time after time. I never did see any mating, but chases can last between two and

By Marcia Bonta



nine hours. As researcher Lawrence Wishner concludes in his book, *Eastern Chipmunks: Secrets of Their Solitary Lives*, “The female’s strategy seems to be to lead the males on a merry chase and eventually surrender to the one who is able to keep up with her. Presumably he is the cleverest and the strongest.”

That was one of several “mating bouts” I observed during mild February days and a reminder that spring — a great awakening, a resurrection — was on its way. ☘

Problems Downstream

The problem of water pollution is not a new one, and it isn't likely to go away soon. Unfortunately, everyone lives downstream from someone else . . .

"The river Rhine, it is well known,
Doth wash your city of Cologne;
But tell me, nymphs! what power divine
Shall henceforth wash the river Rhine?"

— *Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834), English poet, critic, philosopher, in the poem "Cologne"*

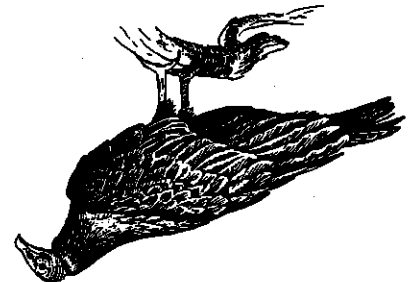
"The breakfast garbage that you throw into the Bay,
They drink at lunch in San Jose."

— *Tom Lehrer (b. 1928), U.S. humorous songwriter, singer, in the 1965 song, "Pollution"*

"Unfortunately, our affluent society has also been an effluent society."

— *Hubert H. Humphrey (1911-1978), U.S. senator, Vice President, in a 1966 speech*

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