

The Gnatcatcher

Newsletter of the
Juniata Valley Audubon Society

P.O. Box 32, Tyrone, Pennsylvania 16686

<www.juniatavalleyaudubon.org>

Vol. 35, No. 3 – May/June 2003

JVAS Honors Fort Roberdeau Director

It seems as though Margaret 'Peggy' Goodman always has been a part of the Fort Roberdeau scene. Peggy started as an Audubon volunteer twenty-three years ago; today she is the director of the Fort Roberdeau Association.

In appreciation, at its annual spring banquet last month, Juniata Valley Audubon presented Peggy with the 2003 JVAS Conservation Award.

As many as fourteen thousand people visit Fort Roberdeau, located in Sinking Valley, Blair County, each year. Many are school children coming for Peggy's award-winning, hands-on, real-life, get-dirty, and sometimes wet, programs that magically blend history with the environment. A host of other visitors come for the Fort's spectacular events such as Revolutionary War Days and the Fourth of July programs, which Peggy expertly plans.

Some people come to the Fort, not as visitors, but as workers. Local volunteers, AARP workers, college interns, community-service folks, and prisoners contribute to the Fort's mission under Peggy's direction. As amazing as it may seem, she handles the thousands of visitors, scores of programs, fourteen buildings, and eighty acres with a full-time, county-paid staff of *one* other person. Blair County taxpayers are getting their money's worth!

The lead-mine Fort began as a Bicentennial Project in 1976. At that time, the Fort sat on two acres. Since then, the acreage and facilities at this historic site have expanded dramatically — mainly due to Peggy's uncanny ability to not only imagine

[Cont'd on page 3]

— May Program —

"EFFECTS OF HABITAT FRAGMENTATION ON PENNSYLVANIA'S WILDLIFE." Most of us recognize that shopping centers, highways, and housing developments directly eliminate wildlife habitat. What is not as well understood is how developing large blocks of habitat has ramifications for wildlife far beyond the project's footprint. While some habitat remains after development, the wildlife that becomes the dominant species of flora and fauna in the smaller habitat blocks are considerably different from those that formerly inhabited that area. Ed Perry, recent retiree from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, will show how habitat fragmentation is helping eliminate our most sensitive species and is changing the face of wildlife in Pennsylvania.

7 P.M., Tuesday, May 20 in the chapel at Alto-Reste Park, on Plank Rd., Altoona — directly across from Wal-Mart.

— May & June Field Trips —

BIRDING AT PRESQUE ISLE STATE PARK. Come along on an overnight trip to one of Pennsylvania's premier migrant traps. The woods will be alive with the sounds of spring! Carpools will depart from the Pleasant Valley Shopping Center (near Unkel Joe's Woodshed) Altoona at 7 A.M. on Saturday and return by 8 P.M. on Sunday. For more info, phone trip leader Dave Kyler at 643-6030.

Saturday & Sunday, May 17-18.

WILDFLOWER WALK AT BLACK MOSHANNON STATE PARK. Gene Zielinski and Sarah Miller will lead a search for some of Pennsylvania's unique wild flora on a walk along the lake and through the bog at Black Moshannon State Park. For more info, phone Gene at 353-8212 or Sarah at 947-0339.

Saturday, June 7. Meet for carpooling at the Pleasant Valley Shopping Center, Altoona (near Unkel Joe's Woodshed) at 9 A.M.

— June Picnic —

JVAS PICNIC. A season-ending, covered-dish picnic will be held at Pavilion No. 2 in Canoe Creek State Park. Bring your own eating utensils! Fellowship and a nature walk will highlight the evening. Please phone JVAS Vice President Cindy Moore at 946-9441 and let her know what kind of victuals you're bringing.

6 P.M., Tuesday, June 17 at Canoe Creek State Park.

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VOL. 35, NO. 3 — MAY/JUNE 2003

Published bimonthly as a benefit for members by

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

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. The membership comprises National Members along with Chapter-only Members.

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

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From the Gnatcatcher's Nest

It's been a grave year regarding protecting the environment in our region. First, proactive environmentalists failed to keep Interstate 99 off the side of Bald Eagle Mountain and now have failed to prevent the Logan Town Centre shopping complex from being built on the side of Brush Mountain.

Yes, we're sorry to say, on April 18, the Department of Environmental Protection issued a permit to Morris Management to construct a highly controversial mall on Brush Mountain at the 17th Street exit off I-99, overlooking Altoona. The Army Corps of Engineers followed with their permit on May 8. The shopping complex will eliminate about four acres of wetlands and about 4,300 feet of streams.

For a laughable editorial in the *Altoona Mirror* and an even more laughable refute by the acting secretary of the DEP, check out page 8. In addition, there's a short comeback by a steaming Sarah Miller, our JVAS Wetlands Chair.

Join National/Juniata Valley Audubon

- Option 1 — National Membership** provides you with the following benefits:
- Subscription to the quarterly *Audubon* magazine, each one filled with superb nature photography and in-depth reporting on environmental issues.
 - Notification of Juniata Valley Audubon's exciting activities including monthly nature programs, field trips, and other events.
 - Subscription to the bimonthly chapter newsletter, *The Gnatcatcher*.
 - Opportunity to participate in local advocacy efforts to help make a real difference.
 - Opportunity to aid in the preservation of the natural world.
 - Opportunity to have FUN! in joining with fellow nature enthusiasts.

Become a National Member with a special introductory rate of \$20 (\$15 for seniors and students). Basic dues thereafter are \$35 annually. Make your check payable to NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY.

- Option 2 — Chapter-only Membership** provides you with all the benefits of Option 1 except for the subscription to *Audubon* magazine.

Become a Chapter-only Member at a minimum annual membership rate of \$15. Make your check payable to JUNIATA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY.

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At the annual spring banquet in April, Juniata Valley Audubon Conservation Chair Mark Henry presents Fort Roberdeau Director Peggy Goodman With the 2003 JVAS Conservation Award for her determination of iron and a will of steel when it comes to preserving the land around the fort.

... JVAS Honors [*Cont'd from first page*]

the possibilities, but her possessing the intelligence, skills, and determination to make it happen!

Under her leadership, White Oak Hall, an architectural masterpiece, was built. It contains an office, a kitchen, porches, and a lodge-like hall for workshops, banquets, and weddings.

In Peggy's first year as director in 1988, a barn built in the 1800s was acquired and beautifully restored. It now serves as a museum, gift shop, classroom, theater, Colonial dance floor, and home for much of Blair County's bat population.

The Meadow Nature Trail framed the Fort under her watchful eye, winding past forest, stream, field,

and a cave entrance. These natural surroundings help today's visitor connect with the lives of early settlers.

In 1991, Peggy obtained grant money to purchase the adjacent Civil War-era farmhouse, situated on three and a half acres. The farmhouse has been meticulously renovated with labor from Huntingdon Prison. Today, it is a repository for historic artifacts, a classroom, and Daniel Roberdeau's parlor.

Last year, Dr. William DeMuth donated thirty-one acres of farmland to the Fort. Visitors now and forever may enter the world of the Fort, viewing woods and fields as they were in Colonial times.

Soon there may be an additional 191 acres, obtained by Peggy's blood, sweat, and tears of frus-

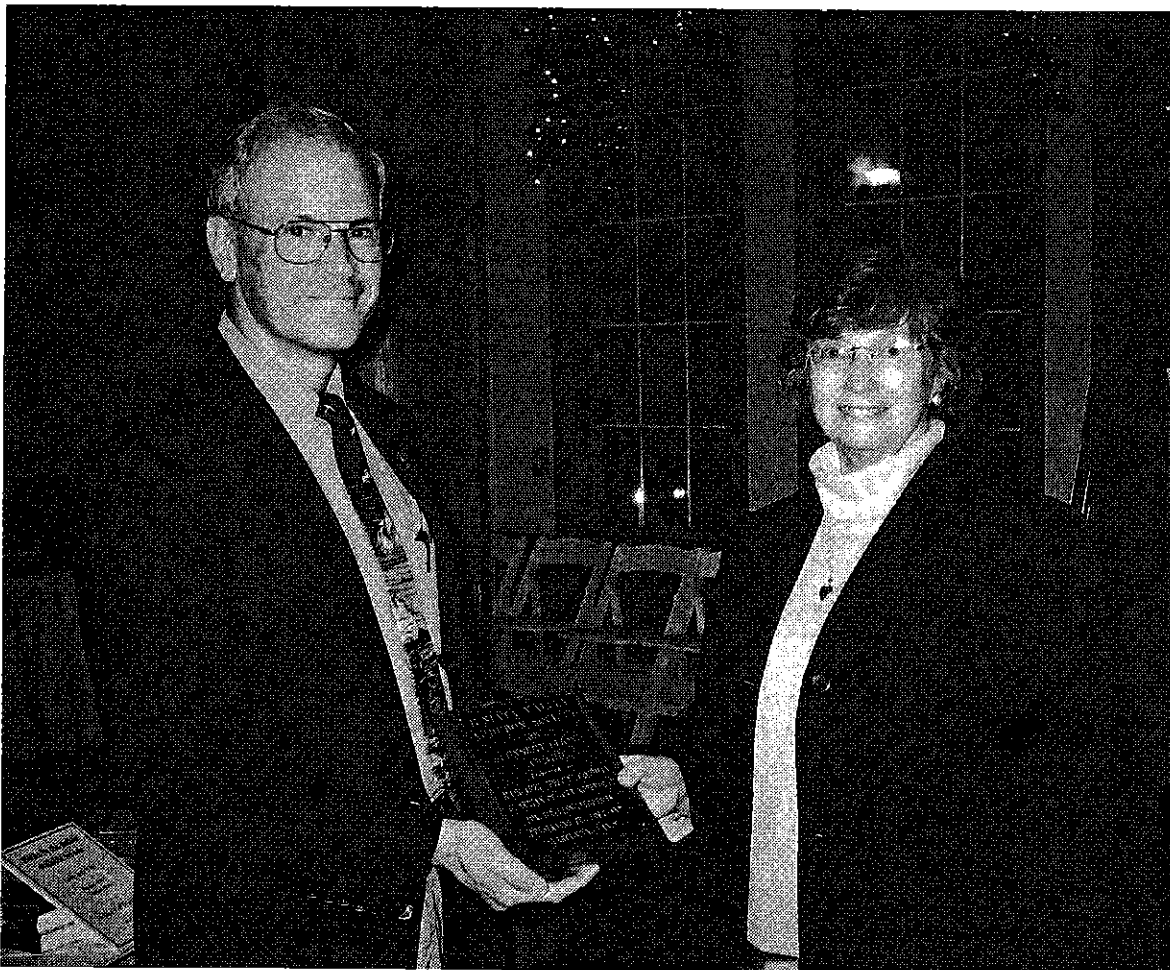
tration and aggravation with the purchase of the adjacent Sunnymead Farm. Peggy has determinedly dogged this project for the past five years, since the farm went up for sale. She has jumped undaunted through the hoops of DEP grants, consultants, bankers, real-estate agents, and lawyers.

Peggy is almost there on the purchase of Sunnymead Farm. The deal probably will go through, but win or lose, Peggy has given this project a long, gut-wrenching effort. This soft-spoken woman has a determination of iron and a will of steel when it comes to preserving the land. Whatever the outcome on this project, she is deserving of praise and recognition for effort alone.

Peggy has imagination, determination, and fore-

sight. She has the foresight, not only to preserve the view from the Fort, but the area surrounding the Fort as well. Thanks to her foresight, visitors do not see and will not see a rabble of housing developments, but see woods and fields with wildlife and wildflowers. Peggy has the imagination to see the Fort as part of a greater picture: Possibly joining other land as part of a greenbelt, possibly incorporating agriculture or environmental educational facilities, and maybe even having the Fort be part of a synergistic web of sustainable, low-environmental-impact businesses in Sinking Valley, all without blowing up Brush Mountain!

Here's to Peggy Goodman, Guardian of the Fort! ☼



Here's to Peggy Goodman, Guardian of the Fort!

CONSERVATION

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By Mark Henry

**The "Trickle Down" Theory —
And I Don't Mean Economics**

With the Bush Administration actively reversing years of slow but steady improvements in environmental protections and conservation, we're seeing "trickle down" effects at the state and local levels. One of the latest Administration attacks is the complete reversal on designating wilderness. Secretary of Interior Gale Norton has withdrawn 2.6 million acres located in Utah from possible wilderness designation. She went further by renouncing the department's authority to conduct wilderness reviews anywhere in the country. Another blow against conservation.

But what also concerns me is that this lack of environmental leadership and attacks on conservation programs is "trickling down" to the state and local levels. For example, why is the state DEP continuing to allow coal companies to destroy private property, water supplies, and aquatic resources through long-wall mining? Is it because acting secretary McGinty is busy meeting with the coal companies and asking for their diligence in efforts to restore and repair surface features and water supplies damaged by undermining?

Why are we asking for their diligence? Why isn't the DEP demanding that the coal companies comply with the Clean Water Act and the department's own clean water regulations and adequately compensate private property owners for damages? And where are these "private property" groups? Why aren't they demanding appropriate compensation?

Locally, JVAS members are aware that a section of I-99 is scheduled to be built along the mountain ridge — an environmentally damaging route. The DEP and the Army Corps of Engineers have issued permits for this route even though there is a less-damaging alternative. Governor Rendell had a brief "window of opportunity" to correct these egregious decisions but, with weak excuses, failed to do so.

Now, we are faced with another environmentally damaging project — the Logan Town Centre shopping complex, near Altoona. And once again, there are alternatives but the DEP has "cowered" to political pressure and has issued the necessary permit.

I have heard some people state that local government, through zoning and planning, can protect the environment. But again, the vast majority of local officials will rezone and re-plan to satisfy the "rich and powerful" — especially now that the federal and state governments are not providing leadership.

So where is the environmental leadership in this country? Where is the fortitude and courage to curb these environmentally destructive activities? Where are these politicians who claim to support environmental protection?

From my viewpoint, the answer is nowhere!

With too few exceptions, our elected and appointed officials have lost the courage, are lacking the leadership, and are too interested in kowtowing to the wealthy, the powerful, and the greedy. They're "selling off" our environment one piece at a time because of money and greed — and then they insult us by calling it "progress."

So where are the courage, fortitude, and leadership to protect the environment going to come from? In my opinion, with governments failing to do the right thing, we at the grassroots must provide the fortitude, courage, and leadership. We must talk with our neighbors and friends, attend public meetings, and voice our opinions. We must write to our elected/appointed officials, involve the news media, and above all, we must vote.

I believe it's up to us, as individuals, to promote conservation and protect the environment the best we can. And yes, we'll lose many "battles" but we must persevere. For if we persevere, someday maybe, just maybe, the elected and appointed officials will realize the "error of their ways" and begin to do the right thing. ☼

QUOTE: "Tradition is what you resort to when you don't have the time or the money to do it right."

— Kirt Herbert Adler

Puerto Rican Birding Adventure

By Shirley Wagoner

Years ago, my husband and I had lived on the beautiful, tropical island of Puerto Rico for two years, assisting with the Church of the Brethren service project. While there, however, I failed to take advantage of seeing more than the most-common birds. So, when I found out about a birding trip to the island recommended by the American Birding Association, I knew I had to go.

I have been making a systematic effort to bird North America and places where I had lived, rather than to travel the world as many birders who are retired do. I have returned to bird California and had a wonderful time along the coast. I also have returned to Arizona and have birded Texas, Florida, New Jersey, and Presque Isle, Pennsylvania.

I arrived in San Juan on March 2, leaving a snowy winter for a balmy, subtropical environment. I was greeted immediately by the coquies (*ko-kees*) — Puerto Rican tree frogs — which enliven the evenings by calling out their names.

After spending a day exploring Old San Juan and revisiting El Morro, the old Spanish-built fortress on the harbor, along with La Fortaleza, the historic palace of the Spanish governor, I drove out to the western mountains where we had lived and where our daughter was born. Castaner, the location of the no-longer-existing project, is such a small place that I feared I would find no place to stay. So I went to the nearest town, Adjuntas, where I knew there was a Parador, one of a new islandwide chain of inns. The inn turned out to be very pleasant, located in a parklike setting. I could have spent my whole week there, birding the forest above the inn. But I was thinking of Castaner and spent the next day driving around the village, trying to locate something familiar! But everything was changed. Sometimes you cannot go back!

I returned to San Juan in time to meet the other birders in my party, which consisted of two leaders and two others. So, including me, the group was an ideal size for birding. Bob O'Dear organized the

group and rented an SUV, which was just big enough to be comfortable for the five of us and our stuff. Bob has retired from the corporate world, lives in Tennessee, and organizes trips from his home. José, a local leader who lives in P.R. and formerly worked for the Fish & Wildlife Service there, knows *all* about Puerto Rican birds. There were two doctors in the group: John, retired, who lives in Ontario, Canada, which he has birded extensively; and David, a young doctor in Cambridge, Mass., who has been an avid birder all his life.

We were searching specifically for *endemics* — birds unique to the island and found nowhere else — so we paid little attention to possible North American migrants. (I don't remember seeing any.) We also noted tropical birds that we see only rarely in the states. A few birds stand out in retrospect.

One of the places we visited was Arecibo, home of the Arecibo Observatory and the world's most sensitive radio telescope. A little way west of the town, there are cliffs where white-tailed tropicbirds nest. You cannot see the nests from above, but the birds are spectacular with white tail streamers longer than their body as they wheel high over the surf looking for fish, squid, or crustaceans.

One evening, in another place, we followed José and his CD player to where, eventually, a Puerto Rican screech-owl was coaxed into view by the recording — a strategy typical of birding leaders. Another time, he got a Puerto Rican lizard-cuckoo to respond, and finally, to fly out to where we could see it well. They both are neat birds — the brown and white, streaked screech-owl for its small size and lack of ear tufts, and the lizard-cuckoo for its long, barred tail and harsh voice!

We also saw the Puerto Rican woodpecker, uniquely colored with a red neck and breast, and a Puerto Rican tody, a small but brilliant bird — green, white, yellow, and bright red.

One afternoon, while searching for brown

boobies (how was this one named?!), we hiked way out on a meadow by the seashore and found mosquitoes but no boobies! After finding the Elfin-woods warbler, a small, black and white bird so active and located in such a specialized area that it was not documented until 1971, our last effort was to see the Puerto Rican parrots, which nest in the El Yunque Rain Forest, on the eastern end of the island. Unfortunately, it rained (surprise!) and the bright, green and blue parrots did not emerge from their roosting place to feed. These parrots once were nearly extinct, but a successful captive-breeding project has allowed many to be returned to the wild. José had

been a part of the project in his younger days. While waiting, we saw and heard another P.R. lizard-cuckoo. Yes, they really do eat lizards, which abound on the island.

As a bit of an afterthought, we visited the campus of the University of Puerto Rico at Rio Piedras, looking for several species of colorful parakeets. They were present in the tall trees and very noisy. We also saw several iguanas that were at least four feet long, fat, and tame.

I was amazed at how many magnificent birds I had missed when I lived on the island, and it was very exciting to see them after so many years. ☼



Juniata Valley Audubon's Education Chair Jody Wallace (*at right*) conducted the 2003 JVAS Bird Watcher's Adventure Raffle at the annual spring banquet last month in Liberty Hall, the new banquet room of the U.S. Hotel, in Hollidaysburg. Relda and Ned Newlin, of Huntingdon Furnace, held the winning ticket — a rent-free stay at Gullway Townhouses, in Ocean City, Md. The distinctive second-prize, a limited-edition print of a snowy egret by Taylor Oughton, was won by Laurie Lehman, of Dayton, Md. The third-prize, a Fiftieth Anniversary Edition of a Roger Tory Peterson Field Guide, *Eastern Birds' Nests*, was won by Michelle Diehl, of Manns Choice.

LTC Point and Counterpoint — Plus

"OUR VIEW" from the opinion page of the
Altoona Mirror, Wed., Apr. 23, 2003

Senator's eruption alters scene

• Jubelirer's forceful push for state DEP permit

Just as a volcano changes the shape of the landscape, a fiery eruption from the powerful head of the state Senate brought about a much-needed change in attitude by a state agency on an important economic development project.

Now we need something to shake loose on the federal level.

For an area seeking more jobs, the outburst by state Senate President Pro Tem Robert C. Jubelirer, R-Blair, at a meeting in Harrisburg in late March was what we needed. It sent strong shock waves across the state's administration, resulting in the Department of Environmental Protection granting a permit for Logan Town Centre a few weeks later.

For some time, Jubelirer and state Rep. Rick Geist, R-Altoona, had been trying to help Morris Management 17th Street Limited Partnership gain state permission to build a shopping center on a 128-acre parcel of land along Interstate 99 between 17th Street and Frankstown Road. The Blair County Republican lawmakers were trying to find a way — without much success — to allow the center to be built and address the state's environmental concerns.

Jubelirer was in Harrisburg on the date in late March when Morris Management was meeting with the DEP, so he sat in. In his view, the meeting was a disaster.

Rather than trying to find a way to allow the project, DEP representatives were finding reasons not to grant permission. The bureaucratic wrangling didn't sit well with the senator, and Jubelirer made his displeasure abundantly and forcefully clear. Recalling that day, Jubelirer quipped he thinks it was one of the moments in time when there may have been puddles of water in the bottom of certain chairs.

Having sent his message, the senator left for a function in Philadelphia. But the aftershocks were rippling through Harrisburg. While en route to Philadelphia, Jubelirer received a call from Kathleen McGinty, who is awaiting Senate confirmation to become DEP secretary. She promised to get involved.

The results were evident Friday [Apr. 18], when Jubelirer again received a call from McGinty, saying Morris Management had been awarded the DEP construction permit. . . .

Jubelirer said the effort to get the DEP permit was as tough of a project as he's ever done, but he believes the project is an important building block for the community's future.

We agree, and we hope the effects of his eruption won't be limited to Logan Town Centre. It's important the state works to find ways to encourage economic development, when environmentally possible. Pennsylvania's recovery is dependent on generating new growth and jobs, as even Democratic Gov. Ed Rendell has noted.

And for helping reinforce that message throughout the state administration, Jubelirer deserves praise.

"YOUR VIEW" from the *Altoona Mirror*,
Wed., May 7, 2003

Editorial refuted

The state Department of Environmental Protection's decision to issue a permit for Logan Town Centre was not the result of a political power play, as the *Altoona Mirror* suggested in its April 23 editorial, "Senator's eruption alters scene." Rather, it was the result of strenuous negotiations that ensured the highest environmental standards would be met.

The *Mirror's* assertion that the DEP moved on this issue because of political pressure is erroneous. The fact is, that I initiated and set the agenda for the meeting referred to in the editorial not because of an external push, but because I recognized that intervention by the DEP's senior management was necessary to close out an issue that had been left simmering far too long.

Senate President Pro Tem Robert Jubelirer, R-Blair, and state Rep. Rick Geist, R-Altoona, have been strong and vocal advocates for this project, and both continue their hard work to see it through to fruition. All of us are determined to end the wrangling over an issue that saw all sides failing.

This administration was a newcomer to what had been a long-standing dispute, but we acted quickly and got the job done, and we did it in a way that meets or exceeds the highest environmental standards. I'm proud of the results the DEP achieved.

In addition to the 4,000 jobs expected to locate to Logan Town Centre, area residents will enjoy 70.4 acres of land set aside for permanent conservation as a result of the agreement, as well as the establishment of at least 8.4 acres of wetlands adjacent to the shopping center site.

The developer will pay \$300,000 for stream restoration projects in Blair County and help fund a Strategic Area Management Plan to identify sensitive water resources and complete a wetlands inventory along the entire Interstate 99 corridor.

The developer thus agreed to pay a big price for this project. For Blair County, that's a major victory. Residents get a development they desperately need and the assurances they deserve that the health and vitality of their environment will not be compromised.

Kathleen A. McGinty, acting secretary
state Department of Environmental Protection

Retort by JVAS Wetlands Chair Sarah J. Miller



Does Kathleen McGinty really think the people of Altoona are that naïve to believe that politics had nothing to do with the issuance of the DEP permit for the Logan Town Centre? Let's call a spade a spade, Ms. McGinty! Your agency issued this permit despite the fact that the project will have significant environmental impacts and for reasons we may never know but can only suspect.

Trying to sugarcoat it by saying we are getting a shiny, new mall, 70.5 acres of land in conservation easement, and 8.4 acres of highly engineered replacement wetlands will not endear you to the majority of people in Altoona who testified that they did not want or need this mall.

It's certainly obvious that money and political connections drove this permit decision, and the precedent set here should be of great concern to all those who care about the future of Pennsylvania's environment!

April's Blossoms

A slow, fits-and-starts spring, full of gentle rains that produce what Pittsburgh botanist Paul Weigman calls a "soft" spring — meaning that wildflowers thrive in such a climate.

Certainly the bright yellow disks of coltsfoot and pink and white blossoms of the fragrant trailing arbutus bloomed on and on in prolific glory throughout most of April. The hepatica didn't produce as many blossoms as last year, but those blossoms that did bloom were a brilliant, deep blue and lasted several weeks.

The many rains and protracted cold also led to a lengthy blooming time for spicebush shrubs. Their lime-green, puffball-like clusters of blossoms brightened the understory along our stream while the soft red, yellow, and orange flowers of red maple trees dominated the overstory.

But April's most wondrous flowering was that of the shadbush. For weeks they dressed up our forest even on the gloomy, gray days with the white of their delicate, five-petaled flowers that trembled in the slightest breeze. Not only did they bloom longer than usual, but every tree, from tiny saplings to full-grown, forty-foot-high specimens, were covered with blossoms.

On April 24 — a beautiful, cold, windy day — I set out on a walk down Black Gum Trail and back along Laurel Ridge Trail looking for these early signs of spring. They were everywhere, in every shape and size, and I thought Black Gum Trail could as easily be called Shadbush Trail. Often, I stood still and found myself encircled by the lovely trees. On some of the trees I examined more closely, the flowers opened first, then the

clumps of soft, reddish leaves beneath them while the flowers still bloomed. The bark of the shadbushes was gray with longitudinal black stripes, many of which had split on older trees.

According to the book, *The Plants of Pennsylvania*, by Ann Fowler Rhoads and Timothy A. Block, we have two species of shadbush — *Amelanchier arborea* and *A. laevis*. Both grow in rocky woods, bluffs, and upland forests. The latter has leaves that show a distinct reddish hue that open while the flowers are still blooming. It is known as smooth shadbush and has dark purple-red, sweet and juicy fruit, while *A. arborea* has dark red, dryish fruit. But we rarely get

to see any trace of the fruit, so popular is it with birds and mammals, from black bears, chipmunks, and foxes to a host of fruit-eating birds such as brown thrashers, wood thrushes, ruffed grouse, wild turkeys, blue jays, and cedar waxwings, to name only a few.

Perhaps the abundant blossoming of the trees this year will leave a few of the fruits for us and we can, at long last, taste what wild-food guru Euell Gibbons, who foraged in central Pennsylvania a couple decades ago, called "a fine fruit to eat out of hand . . . delicious as a stewed fruit or sauce." Furthermore, he claims that "few

fruits equal the Juneberry as pie timber" and that "Juneberries make wonderful muffins." "Juneberry," incidentally, is an alternate name for shadbush, since June is when it fruits. Since shadbush bloomed the same time that shad came up the rivers in the spring, some colonists called it either "shadbush" or "shadblow."

By Marcia Bonta



Still another name is "serviceberry," and the origin of that name is a little more obscure. Naturalist/writer Donald Culross Peattie claims that it is a corruption of "sorbus," given by the Romans to a related kind of fruit. Chuck Fergus, in his excellent book, *Trees of Pennsylvania and the Northeast*, says that the fruit is that of a "related mountain-ash. A more colorful story," Fergus continues, "holds that 'service' refers to memorial services that circuit preachers performed in spring, around the time of the shadbushes' blossoming, to

commemorate settlers who had died during the preceding winter."

Whatever you call these trees, though, their beauty in early spring is their most memorable trait. They light up the forest (and our spirits) with their clusters of white flowers just when it seems as if true spring will never come. Whether or not the abundant rains and late snow storms of this "soft" spring encouraged their abundant blossoming, shadbush provided reward enough for walking on even the glowering days. ☼

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