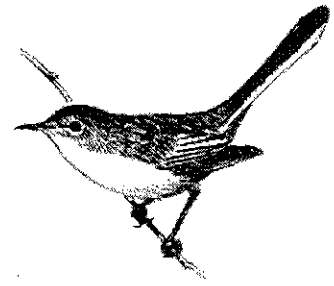


# THE GNATCATCHER

Newsletter of Juniata Valley Audubon



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[www.juniatavalleyaudubon.org](http://www.juniatavalleyaudubon.org)

## ClearWater Conservancy Purchases Musser Gap

*Water and Wildlife Habitat Protected, Fundraising Campaign for Conservation Launched*

On August 8, 2006 ClearWater Conservancy purchased the 423-acre Musser Gap for natural resource conservation its most important land conservation project to date. The Conservancy bought the land from a private landowner who had planned to develop the property. In early 2007, Musser Gap will be incorporated into Rothrock State Forest, providing public access to its impressive network of trails.

Musser Gap is part of the Tussey Mountain Important Bird Area, as designated by the Pennsylvania Audubon, is adjacent to the Rothrock State Forest and Stone Mountain Important Bird Area, and is also within the one-year zone of contribution of the State College Borough Water Authority's Harter and Thomas well fields, which supply drinking water to approximately 38,000 residents of the Centre Region.

Conserving Musser Gap protects vital water resources, important wildlife species, and treasured recreational opportunities for future generations. Mountain gaps serve as primary contributors to groundwater recharge in the Spring Creek Watershed. Additionally, any contamination introduced through these mountain gaps would quickly reach the groundwater aquifers that they feed.

Tussey Mountain is a noted flyway for spring-migrating raptors. Each year the Tussey Mountain Hawkwatch records the highest number of spring-migrating golden eagles east of the Mississippi.

The mature and largely-unfragmented deciduous forest also provides important habitat for nesting forest-interior Neotropical migratory birds.

This land acquisition project was made possible with significant funding from the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, the State College Borough Water Authority, the Townships of Ferguson, Harris, Patton, College, and Halfmoon, the Borough of State College, Huplits Foundation, and Altrusa International.

To donate ClearWater's Land Conservation Program, which made the protection of Musser Gap a reality, the Conservancy has launched a \$250,000 Campaign for Conservation. According to Walt Ebaugh, volunteer campaign chair, "our Campaign for Conservation will raise the money we need take on the next large land conservation projects in the places that matter most in central Pennsylvania." Other current conservation initiatives include the Scotia Barrens, the Spring Creek corridor, and several specific conservation easements on lands with important natural resource values.

*To contribute to the Campaign for Conservation,  
please make checks payable to*

**ClearWater Conservancy  
2555 North Atherton Street  
State College, PA 16803.**

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

# Penn State Altoona Students learn about nature through JVAS at Canoe Creek

JVAS president Dr. Stan Kotala led about 2 dozen Penn State Altoona students on an informative nature hike at Canoe Creek State Park on Friday, September 22 as part of the Environmental Studies class. Fine late September weather graced the day as the students gathered around to admire JVAS' handiwork at the Canoe Creek butterfly garden adjacent to the visitor center. With New England aster and orange coneflowers still in bloom and attracting migrating monarchs, the garden delighted the students as well as their instructors, Donna Leibecker and Todd Davis.

The students exhibited a full range of knowledge about nature. Coming from many different geographical areas, they related experiences they had had that brought them closer to the natural world, be it finding a hellbender in the Owassee Rapids on Pine creek to fighting for the preservation of a coastal marsh used by diamondback terrapins in Cape May, New Jersey.

Mary Anne's Marsh, a designated Biological Diversity Area in the Blair County Natural Heritage Inventory, helped the students to understand the ingredients for a wetland: hydric soils, wetland plants, and water. Cattails, arrowhead, and alders were plants that most were familiar with.

During a search along Mary Anne's Creek one student found a large crayfish, another found a larval northern dusky salamander, and one found a northern two-lined salamander. Many were surprised to learn that these aquatic salamanders stayed active all winter long in fast-moving streams.

Tree identification lessons taught them to recognize tulip trees, basswood, beech, red oak, white oak, hemlock, muscle wood, hop hornbeam, dogwood, catalpa, walnut, ash, and alder.



*Students rest among the sugar maples on the northwestern slope of Moore's Hill after a strenuous climb.*



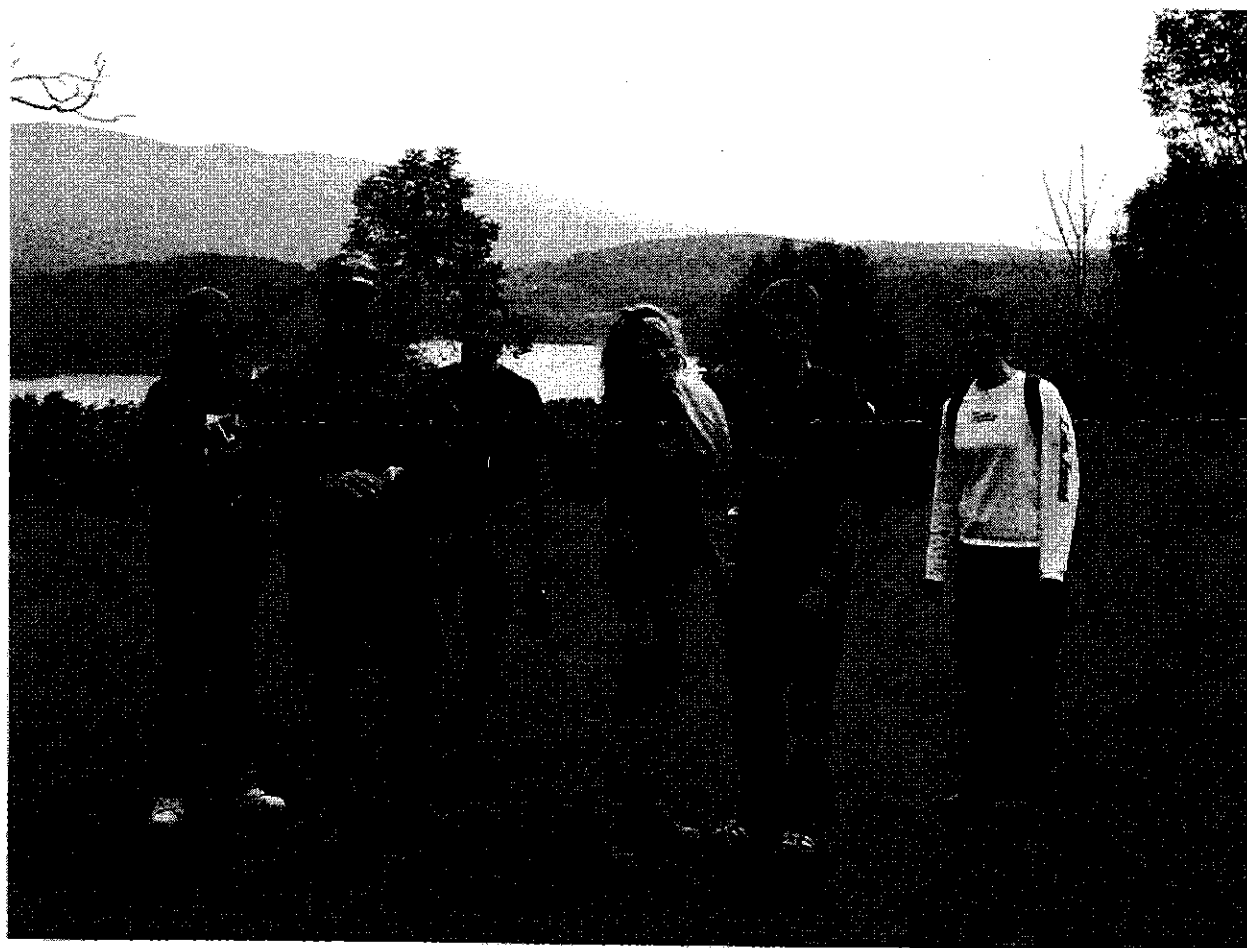
The long and strenuous trek up the northwestern slope of Moore's Hill revealed delightful stands of woodland asters and snakeroot. Students noticed a change in the character of the woods here, dominated by sugar maple on this cold northern side of the hill. From a distance they could see the large sterile lawns that characterize some of the residential areas of Scotch Valley.

*Scrambling up the steep slope from Scotch Valley towards the Hartman Hibernaculum*

Our group had to go off-trail to climb the steep slope from the Moore's Hill Trail to the Hartman Hibernaculum and its spectacular overlook of Scotch Valley. The view of the valley and Brush Mountain showed the students the value of large contiguous tracts of forest, such as that on Brush Mountain, which act as both core habitats and corridors for wildlife migration. The importance of connecting strips of woodland between the residential areas of the valley and especially along streams coming off the slopes of Brush Mountain and entering Mary Anne's Creek was readily apparent. Wildlife from the mountain could readily follow these corridors for dispersion to new areas and to use varying habitats for their seasonal needs.

Everyone marveled at the story of the Canoe Creek bat hibernation site: its rescue from imminent destruction, preservation of the mines, gating to safeguard the bats, and the expansion of the bat population. Six species of bats hibernate in the abandoned mines in Moore's Hill, including the federally endangered Indiana bat and the threatened small-footed bat. In total, 25,000 bats spend the winter in the Hartman Mine.

Finally going downhill again, to many a student's relief, we were exhilarated by a fantastic view of Canoe Lake and Lock and Loop Mountains under a blue sky with wispy white clouds. A wonderful hike taught the Penn State Altoona Environmental Studies class many things about our natural world and encouraged a deep bonding to nature which is essential to the human spirit.



*On the road downhill from the Hartman Hibernaculum on Moore's Hill, with Lock Mountain in the distance.  
The end of a great day!*

***"Nature is a part of our humanity, and without some awareness and experience of that divine mystery man ceases to be man."***

***Henry Beston, The Outermost House***

# First U.S. Wildlife Charity Postage Stamps Issued

## New Stamps to "Save our Songbirds" and "Stamp out Extinction"

American Bird Conservancy (ABC – [www.abcbirds.org](http://www.abcbirds.org)) announces the launch of the first U.S. charity postage stamps to support wildlife conservation. The new stamps feature illustrations of the Cerulean Warbler – a declining songbird – and the recently-rediscovered Ivory-billed Woodpecker. The stamps are 2.5" x 1.5". Each carries a face value of 39 cents, and they can be used for regular U.S. postage.

The stamps are available through the ABC web site at [www.abcbirds.org](http://www.abcbirds.org).

Not only will these stamps contribute much-needed funds to priority bird conservation projects, they will also help raise awareness of the need to conserve America's birds.

The stamps are themed to reflect two important bird conservation goals: to halt species extinctions, and to restore American songbird populations. Twenty-seven percent of the net proceeds from all stamp sales ordered through ABC's web site will contribute directly to bird and habitat conservation programs. ABC is a 501 (c) (3) not-for-profit organization whose mission is to conserve wild birds and their habitats throughout the Americas. It is recognized as a top-rated charity by the independent group Charity Navigator.

The Ivory-billed Woodpecker stamp illustration was painted by Washington-based artist Todd Telander [www.toddtelander.com](http://www.toddtelander.com). *The Cerulean Warbler image was adapted by ABC graphic designer Gemma Radko from a photograph by bird bander Robert Mulvihill. The original photograph was taken at Powdermill Nature Reserve in Pennsylvania [www.powdermill.org](http://www.powdermill.org), where researchers have been banding migratory birds to track their movements since 1961.*



## How Many Light Bulbs Does It Take to Protect the Environment and Save \$30?

Saving \$30, and protecting the environment, is as easy as changing a light bulb, according to EPA. If every American household changed a single light bulb to an Energy Star bulb, it would provide enough power to light more than 2.5 million homes, while saving consumers money.

"Change A Light, Change The World," which started on Oct. 4, is an annual campaign by EPA and the Department of Energy (DOE) that encourages Americans to replace a conventional bulb or fixture in the home or workplace with one that has earned the government's Energy Star label for energy efficiency. This year, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is joining the campaign to extend its reach.

Energy Star qualified bulbs and fixtures use one-third the energy of traditional models and last up to 10 times

longer. In fact, consumers can save more than \$30 in utility costs over the lifetime of one bulb. Replacing the most frequently used lights at home will yield the most savings.

Individuals who pledged during last year's "Change a Light, Change the World" Campaign will prevent greenhouse gas emissions equivalent to nearly 3,000 vehicles and save \$2 million in energy costs.

Americans are invited to visit the Energy Star Web site to join the more than 110,000 who have pledged to replace at least one light at home, and see the positive difference even small energy-saving actions at home can make.

General information about the Energy Star Change A Light campaign can be found at <http://www.energystar.gov/index.cfm>

# Stabilization and Shrinkage of European Human Population allows Wildlife to Flourish

After centuries of merciless hunting and destruction of wildlife habitat, bears, wolves, lynx, eagles, and moose are re-inhabiting western Europe, migrating westward from eastern Europe and the Balkans. Moose from Poland have made it to the gates of Munich. Brown bears from Slovakia and Slovenia have now established a resident population of about 30 animals in Austria. Italy's national parks are home to more than 100 bears, and roughly the same number live in northern Spain and the Pyrenees. Wolf packs hunt in Italy, Spain, Portugal, and the French Alps -- and, since 2002, on a German army firing range. The lynx, virtually extinct in Europe, has re-established itself in the Alps, the Pyrenees, and the Carpathians. Eagles have bounced back, and so have bearded vultures. River otters are advancing west at the rate of six miles each year.



The rewilding of Western Europe is the result of dramatic political and demographic changes. The fall of the Iron Curtain almost two decades ago eliminated a major obstacle to their westward trek. Parts of the former no-man's-land area in the heart of Germany, once dotted with landmines, have now been set aside as a "green band" to protect plant and animal habitat. A shrinking human population is steadily abandoning mountainous and wooded areas, and European agricultural policies are turning away from using every acre of land for food production.

Best of all, popular attitudes seem to be shifting. Once upon a time the big bad wolf was a staple of European fairy tales, but today people have an appreciation for the presence of these wild creatures. "We are now learning that red deer, bison, moose, wild horses, wolves, and bears not only are a luxury but also play a key role in maintaining natural habitats," says Christoph Heinrich of Naturschutzbund Deutschland (NaBu) [www.nabu.de](http://www.nabu.de), the German Society for Nature Conservation.

*A wolf pair in the German state of Saxony, photo by S. Zibolsky, NaBu*

*O'er ruined fences the grapevines shield  
The woods come back to the mowing field...*

Robert Frost, *Ghost House*

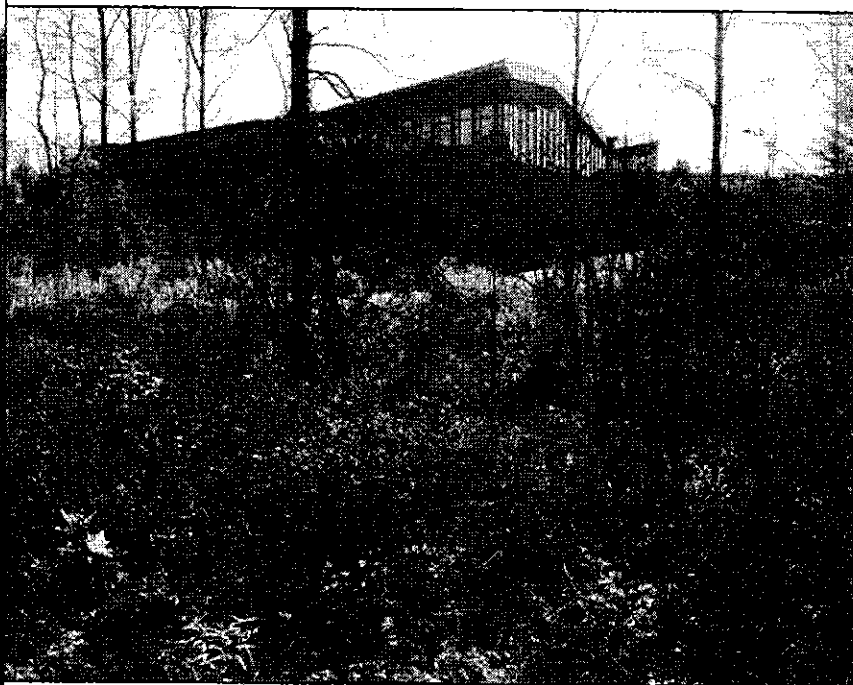
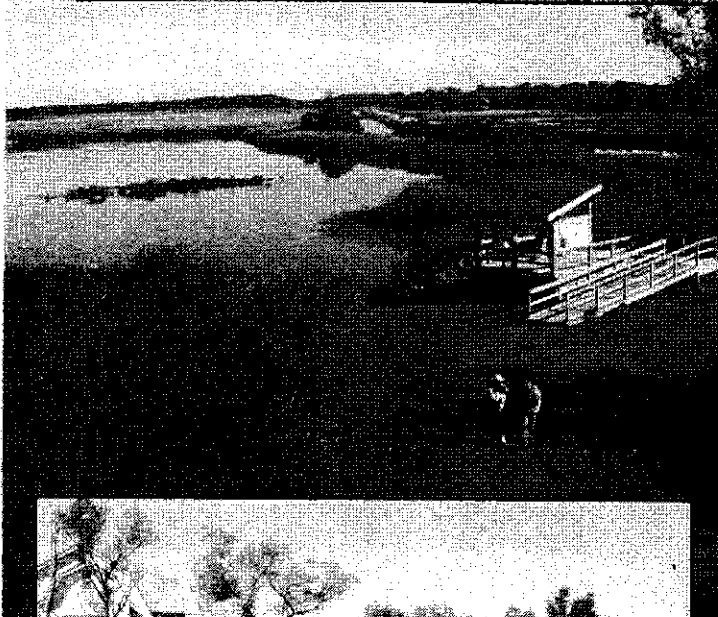
## ***REGISTER FOR JVAS e-NEWS!***

JVAS members interested in receiving timely notice of events such as meetings, field trips, JVAS Juniata Club river trips, and local conservation issues should send their name and email address to JVAS E-NEWS editor Helena Kotala at [ccwiba@keyconn.net](mailto:ccwiba@keyconn.net) to subscribe to our free news service.

# JVAS Field Trip to Cornell Lab of Ornithology and Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge







# JVAS Gnatcatcher Editor receives Photography Awards



*"Elk," above, earned a fourth place finish in the Pennsylvania Wildlife Federation's youth photography contest, while "Elk at Trout Run," left, earned second place.*

JVAS Gnatcatcher editor Helena Kotala received the 2nd and 4th place awards in the Pennsylvania Wildlife Federation's youth photography contest. Focusing on "Pennsylvania's Unique Species and Habitats," the contest encouraged young people to seek out and photograph the Keystone State's characteristic landscapes and animals, [www.pfsc.org/MayOT06.pdf](http://www.pfsc.org/MayOT06.pdf). Helena specializes in photographing natural landscapes and wildlife and was honored with an exhibition of her nature photography at the Altoona Area Library this past February. Her photos are available through **Nature's Images**, RR 3 Box 866, Altoona, PA 16601, 814-946-8840, [ccwiba@keyconn.net](mailto:ccwiba@keyconn.net).





## THE FOLLOWING EDITORIAL BY THE HARRISBURG PATRIOT-NEWS WAS PUBLISHED ON OCTOBER 8:

### Care has to be taken when placing windmills across state

The growing opposition to and concern in Pennsylvania for the placement of huge windmills, especially on ridge tops, highlights the need for thoughtful, science-based statewide siting regulations.

It also shows that "alternative energy" sources aren't necessarily environmentally benign. While the impact of extracting and burning fossil fuels raises serious environmental issues — from acid-mine drainage to global warming — windmills come with a different set of environmental challenges.

Those seeking to build them look for maximum wind advantage, which explains the focus on ridge tops, particularly in Somerset and Bedford counties, as staff writer David DeKok reported last week in the Sunday Patriot-News. But other areas are under consideration, including a proposal by Harrisburg Mayor Stephen R. Reed to place windmills on the ridge tops above city-owned DeHart Reservoir, potentially despoiling the largest roadless tract in eastern Pennsylvania.

Placing large numbers of windmills — which can well exceed the height of the Statue of Liberty — on ridge tops raises a number of serious environmental concerns. These include fragmenting some of the last large tracts of forest in the commonwealth, home to species that require lots of space to succeed and survive. About four acres must be cleared of trees for each windmill, in addition to clearings needed for access roads and transmission lines. The removal of vegetation on this scale on the already poor soil of the ridge

tops can lead to erosion and decreased water quality.

Though windmill proponents claim that progress has been made in reducing the number of birds killed by windmills, opponents argue that too few independent studies have been conducted, especially of birds, bats and insects traveling along established flight paths at night. Along the Allegheny Front in West Virginia, Maryland and Pennsylvania, where much windmill construction has occurred and is planned, some 1.7 million birds fly by each night during migration season, according to ornithologists.

The loss of the visual beauty of Pennsylvania's rolling green ridges is no small sacrifice to make, either, to get what amounts to a relatively small part of our electricity from the wind.

Like everything else, common sense and a decent respect for the other important elements in the equation must be part of windmill siting. While we understand that owners of windmills are looking for optimal wind conditions, if this energy source is to succeed on any scale it is going to have to apply more sophisticated approaches to deploy them under less than ideal but workable conditions, such as in urban settings and industrial parks.

Unless the state adopts windmill-siting standards, it can only mean trouble for an alternative form of energy the Rendell administration is heavily promoting. That is not an approach that can make serious headway in moving the state away from its over-reliance on fossil fuels.

# IN DEFENSE OF DEAD TREES

Prior to European colonization, much of the state was covered by a dense forestland that had a substantial number of dead and dying trees. It was a great time for cavity-nesting birds and squirrels. The state's settlement, of course, would change that eventually. And to this day, development continues to swallow more wild lands and often forestland or woodlots. Dead and dying trees typically are some of the first to be cleared. Wildlife managers familiar with the important habitat dead and dying trees provide forest ecosystems believe these trees deserve more respect than they're getting. They can - and should - be managed with the same considerations live trees receive.

**"Dozens of wild birds and mammals use tree cavities for shelter, resting or nesting,"** explained Cal DuBrock, Pennsylvania Game Commission Bureau of Wildlife Management director.

**"Some excavate their own cavities in the decaying wood of dead and dying trees. Others wait for a woodpecker to do the work and then occupy and enlarge the cavity. These cavities in dead and dying trees - as well as some living trees - are invaluable to bluebirds, American kestrels, wood ducks, flickers, pileated woodpeckers, chickadees and many other species. Their limited availability makes each one a precious commodity in any forest, woodlot or backyard."**

The natural benefits provided by dead and dying trees extend beyond cavities in the trunk. The separating or peeling bark can shelter resting bats during daylight hours, or provide habitat for insects that many wild birds consume. The bare, weather-worn branches are favored hunting perches for hawks and owls. After the tree falls, it provides shelter for amphibians, reptiles, birds, mammals and insects. The tree's decaying debris also returns nutrients to the soil, ultimately strengthening the forest's ability to support life.

**"It doesn't matter whether a dead tree is standing and serving as an insect smorgasbord for woodpeckers, or laying on the forest floor and providing a silent passageway through the noisy leaf litter for hunting red foxes and habitat for amphibians, every woodland needs and benefits from them,"** DuBrock said. **"They not only provide unique habitat and habitat diversity, but they also are part of the natural order that all successful forest stewardship programs strive to promote."**

**"Since the Game Commission's State Game Lands system represents less than five percent of all Pennsylvania lands, Pennsylvania landowners obviously play a critical role in managing the state's forests and the extremely limited number of dead trees found on this land. Their influence on cavity-nesters and habitat diversity can be very profound. That's why it's so important that more Pennsylvanians understand wildlife's dependency on their actions."**

The Game Commission has a State Game Lands tree policy in place that requires snags and den trees to be retained on timber harvest areas. This retention policy allows for these valuable wildlife havens to be retained and incorporated into future plans for the stand. The agency's management philosophy is guided by creating a balance of habitat types on State Game Lands, providing the immediate habitat of the dead trees while providing the essential elements of early successional type habitats necessary for species such as ruffed grouse and American woodcock, along with the highly sensitive species such as golden-winged warblers.

It has been estimated that dead trees and trees that contain decaying wood provide important habitat for about 25 percent of the forest wildlife species in the northeastern United States. Considering that, it quickly becomes obvious that nesting boxes only can help ease the demand. Moreover, nesting boxes just don't provide the insulating qualities that tree cavities offer in winter. They are mostly a warm-weather solution to the plight of cavity-nesters, not a panacea.

A dead tree can stand for decades, providing critical shelter and food to myriad species. It's a habitat high-rise that attracts considerable attention in any wildlife community or ecosystem. What determines how long the tree will stand includes factors such as whether it's surrounded by other trees that will reduce wind and impede sunlight, the species of tree (hardwoods such as oak typically remain upright longer), and the type of terrain or area in which it grew. Trees near streams seem to take more abuse from the elements than other places because they have greater exposure to water and shade.

**"If a dead or dying tree isn't threatening your residence, picnic pavilion or roadway, the Game Commission recommends leaving it to nature and the benefit of wildlife,"** emphasized DuBrock. **"It won't be long before you'll see its worthiness to wildlife and begin to appreciate the additional character it affords your backyard or woodlot. If you're into wildlife, you should be into dead trees."**

When a dead tree poses threats to a nearby structure or activity area, landowners should consider stripping down the snag to reduce or eliminate its potential to cause trouble. Using a hydraulic cherry-picker - never climb a dead tree - remove part of the tree's top and/or branches to remedy the risk. Even a branchless trunk - cut to a height that addresses the landowner's safety concerns - has wildlife and ecological value, and should be considered over removing the tree entirely.

**"Remember, as a rule, dead trees don't come down in a hurry, particularly hardwoods,"** Klinger said. **"So as long as safety isn't a concern, let nature take its course. The tree will become a wildlife magnet and will be worth its weight in gold to the creatures using it. Let that dead tree stay on. Rest assured, it will make wild friends fast."**

# join JUNIATA VALLEY AUDUBON!

Juniata Valley Audubon membership provides you with the following benefits:

- Notification of Juniata Valley Audubon's exciting activities including nature programs, field trips and other events
- Subscription to the bimonthly chapter newsletter, *The Gnatcatcher*
- Opportunities to participate in conservation projects and environmental advocacy, *and have fun!*

Become a chapter-only member: \_\_\_\_\_ Individual: \$15      \_\_\_\_\_ Family: \$20      \_\_\_\_\_ Supporting: \$35

\_\_\_\_\_ Friend of JVAS: \$50      \_\_\_\_\_ Corporate: \$100

\_\_\_\_\_ Life Membership: \$500— JVAS Life Membership provides you with all the benefits listed above for a once-in-a-lifetime fee of \$500.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Street \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Mail this form to

**Juniata Valley Audubon**  
**c/o Dr. Stan Kotala, President**  
**RR 3 Box 866**  
**McMullen Road**  
**Altoona, PA 16601-9206**

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Conservation ..... Dr. Stan Kotala      (see above)

Education.....Dr. Stan Kotala      (see above)

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CBC Coordinator.....Heidi Boyle      949-9302

<hboyle@state.pa.us>

NAMC Coordinator...Dr. Stan Kotala      (see above)

## PROGRAMS

**November 21-Ferns, Clubmosses, Liverworts and Spleenworts of the Juniata Valley:** Tom Lord will teach us about the non-flowering vascular plants that can be found in our area.

**ABOUT JVAS PROGRAMS:** Programs are presented on the third Tuesday of each month. They begin at 7 PM in the chapel at Alto-Reste Park on Plank Road, Altoona. Our programs are designed for a general audience, and are free and open to the public.

## FIELD TRIPS

**Saturday, November 4-Ned Smith Center/ Sibley Exhibit:** We'll visit the Ned Smith Center for Nature and Art near Harrisburg to meet acclaimed field guide author and artist David Allen Sibley who'll guide a tour of his works on exhibition. Meet at Unkel Joe's Woodshed in Altoona at 8am. Bring a bag lunch. Trip leader Terry Wentz, 693-6563, [twentz2@verizon.net](mailto:twentz2@verizon.net)

## CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

**Saturday, December 16**

Please contact JVAS CBC Coordinator Heidi Boyle at 949-9302 or [hboyle@state.pa.us](mailto:hboyle@state.pa.us) for information on how to take part in this annual one-day census of winter birds.

*We'll sum up the day's count with dinner at Marge and Charlie Hoyer's Mt. Charma Estate. Contact the Hoyers at 684-7376 for dinner information and directions*

**JVAS Juniata Club River Trips** take place according to weather and water levels. If you would like your name added to the Juniata Club roster, contact Helena Kotala at [ccwiba@keyconn.net](mailto:ccwiba@keyconn.net) or 946-8840. She will notify you of upcoming trips by email or phone.

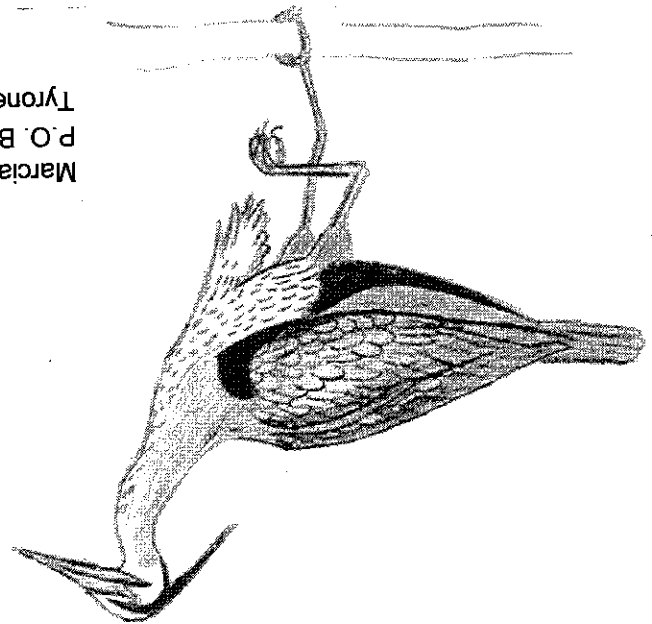
Printed by Wick Copy Center

Great Blue Heron  
by JVAS Staff Artist Emily Maycher  
166866-0068-64 8001

Marcia Bonta  
P.O. Box 68  
Tyrone PA

166866-0068

8/1/2007



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