

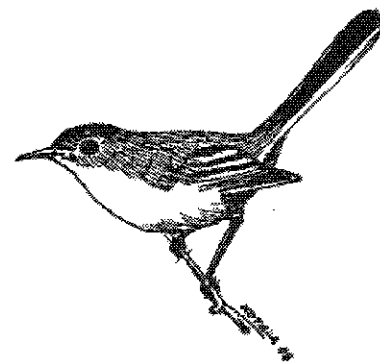
# The Gnatcatcher

## Newsletter of Juniata Valley Audubon

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## Tyrone considers transforming County Natural Heritage Area into Industrial Windplant

Juniata Valley Audubon is troubled by the Tyrone Borough Council's track record of ignoring Ice Mountain's designation as a Blair County Natural Heritage Area. Not once has any Tyrone Borough Council member publicly addressed the severe impact that a proposed industrial windplant would have on this County Natural Heritage Area, which is described as an area that is "unique" and "of exceptional conservation value" in the Blair County Natural Heritage Inventory that was done under the direction of the Blair County Planning Commission 5 years ago and accepted by the Blair County Commissioners 2 years ago.

There is growing consensus among the scientific community that ridgetop industrial windplants pose significant threats to Pennsylvania's natural heritage. As a matter of fact, a recent statement by the Pennsylvania Biological Survey described the impact of industrial windplants in ridgetop forested settings as "severe." The US Fish and Wildlife Service describes three broad impacts of industrial windplants: direct mortality of birds and bats, the inducement of avoidance behavior, and forest fragmentation. The Pennsylvania Game Commission describes the Allegheny Front, of which Ice Mountain is a part, as a "high risk site" for industrial windplant development. Dr. Keith Bildstein, director of conservation at world-famous Hawk Mountain, writes that these "high risk" sites should be off-limits to industrial windplant development. In addition the Allegheny Front is designated as an Important Bird Area by the Pennsylvania Biological Survey because of its intact forests and importance to bird migration. Dr. Todd Katzner of the National Aviary has demonstrated through radiotelemetry that Ice Mountain is on the major eastern golden eagle migratory route and he states that the golden eagle, Tyrone High School's mascot, is the species most at risk from industrial windplant development.

An industrial windplant on Ice Mountain would require the carving out of many miles of new heavy-duty roadway to construct and service the two dozen gargantuan industrial wind turbines that Gamesa plans to construct west and north of Tyrone. The Blair County Natural Heritage Inventory specifically states that the construction of roads should be avoided in this County Natural Heritage Area.

This proposed extensive road network has substantial ecological costs, including increased erosion, chemical and thermal water pollution, spread of invasive exotics, and forest fragmentation. Such impacts extend out to 300 yards on either side of a road creating a "road-effect zone." Road-related habitat fragmentation is a huge problem in Pennsylvania and it is getting worse by the day as more roads are built in contiguous forests.

When roads reach a certain density (miles of road per area of land) an ecological threshold is reached whereby sensitive wildlife species begin to show signs of stress or avoidance of otherwise suitable habitat. Ecological thresholds related to roads have been noted for aquatic systems as well: roads disrupt hydrologic flow, alter streamside habitat, fragment aquatic habitat, and reduce water quality.

Ice Mountain and the County Natural Heritage Area of which it is a part contain irreplaceable reservoirs of wildlife habitat and perform many valuable ecological services diminished by roads and other developments that degrade natural landscapes. Ecosystem services that are diminished by roads and associated uses include the provision of essential habitat for species of conservation concern, the provision of a broad array of habitat types, the provision of "buffer areas" from exotic species invasions and edge effects, the provision of refugia for road sensitive species, the provision of landscape and regional connectivity; and the provision of strongholds for trout and other coldwater species in Sink Run, Decker Run, Vanscoyoc Run, and Big Fill Run (all of which would be impacted by the Sandy Ridge Wind Farm).

Three years of debate have failed to deter the windplant developer from this destructive project because the developer's decisions have been based on a lack of understanding of the values that Blair County Natural Heritage Areas provide for our county. In fact, the developer ignores or dismisses Ice Mountain's status in the Blair County Natural Heritage Inventory.

We expect that Ice Mountain, a unique Blair County Natural Heritage Area of exceptional conservation value, will be managed to the highest ecological standard, and will be protected from further degradation. It is not possible to respect Ice Mountain's status as a County Natural Heritage Area and then vote "yes" to convert it into an industrial windplant. Juniata Valley Audubon asks that each Tyrone Borough Council member acknowledge Ice Mountain's status as being unique and of exceptional conservation value and therefore vote "NO" to the industrial windplant proposal.

***Please sign and send the enclosed postcard asking Tyrone Borough Council to vote NO to the proposal to convert this unique Blair County Natural Heritage Area into an industrial windplant!***

# A Fall Ramble on Pennsylvania's Wildest Trail

By JVAS Conservation Chair Dr. Stan Kotala

*"Why do large numbers of hikers venture into the wet, wild woods with biting insects and stinging nettles, on trails lined with roots and studded with rocks? There is something different and deeply appealing about hiking in the out-of-doors. The wilder and more beautiful the land, the better the hiking. Clearly, these experiences are spiritual. It is the deep, but bright, secret of hiking. Spiritual experience is essential to our well being, so hiking remains popular."*

--- Tom Thwaites

Cool crisp days put many in the mood for hiking and one of the best hikes in the Centre region is along the Mid State Trail (MST) on Tussey Mountain. The Mid State Trail is Pennsylvania's longest and wildest footpath. When completed, this wilderness footpath will stretch from Pennsylvania's border with Maryland to New York State, joining with the Green Ridge Trail and the Finger Lakes Trail, respectively. Currently, the MST only makes it as far north as the northern terminus of Pennsylvania's Grand Canyon (Pine Creek Gorge), but it does reach the Mason-Dixon Line.

A monument erected in 2003 near Little Flat Fire Tower marks the MST's 1969 birthplace. Volunteers from the Penn State Outing Club, and many others led by the MST's founder, Tom Thwaites, headed out of town and up Tussey Mountain to clear the trail over the rocky ridgetop. Thwaites set out to build a trail that bisected the state after he found signs of an early 20th century trail system through the state forests. Students pitched in to help him construct the MST, using those old trails as a starting point. Unfortunately, some portions of the trail had become neglected, so much so that the Keystone Trails Association designated it as an Endangered Hiking Trail in 1982 because maintenance of the already constructed areas had fallen behind over the years. Currently the trail is maintained by volunteers who adopt trail segments for regular maintenance. Tom Thwaites still serves as the MST's State College Regional Manager.

Under the leadership of Outings Chair Ben Cramer, the Moshannon Group of the Sierra Club last spring adopted the most challenging and scenic segment of the MST, 3 rocky miles on Tussey Mountain from the Little Juniata River to Colerain Road in Rothrock State Forest. About a dozen Moshannon Group members, ranging in age from 14 to 66, assisted in painting orange blazes, clearing downed logs from the trail, and making sure that the footpath was clearly visible to hikers. After several work sessions, the trail was deemed satisfactory by the Moshannon Group volunteers.

Known for its great views, this portion of the trail is an outstanding hike for fall foliage lovers. The segment between the Little Juniata River and Colerain Road can be hiked as a "challenge" or "more of a challenge." The "challenge" way would be to hike from Colerain Road south, with a descent to the river at the endpoint. The "more of a challenge" would be the ascend Tussey Mountain first and then proceed northward along the relatively level crest of the mountain toward Colerain Road.



*Noted hiking guide author Ben Cramer (our November program speaker) and JVAS Membership/Publications Chair Dr. Alice Kotala paint blazes along the MST.*

Make sure you have sturdy hiking boots, plenty of water and snacks, because, although this trail segment is only 3 miles long, it is a tough hike due to the sandstone outcrops and rocks that make up the knife-edge top of Tussey in this area. Also bring a camera because your chance of seeing charismatic fauna such as bears and rattlesnakes is very good, and because you will have some excellent views of the surrounding landscape.

To hike the "challenge," park one car at the Little Juniata Natural Area parking lot in Rothrock State Forest near Barree in Huntingdon County. Then drive another car to Colerain Road, parking at the crest of Tussey Mountain, where the MST crosses Colerain road.

Your hike south along this MST segment will follow the ridgetop, so, even if you somehow miss the frequent bright orange 5 cm x 15 cm blazes that mark the trail, you will easily find your way again. The entire ridge is dominated by chestnut oaks, with white pine, hickory, and red maple adding variety. You'll not notice any significant change in elevation for the first 2 miles, but you will be treated to several excellent views of forested Round Top and the McLain Run valley to the east, even being able to see Jack's Mountain most days.

The best view, and a fantastic place to stop for snacks or lunch, is at the large talus slope that marks the beginning of your descent into the Little Juniata River gorge. This rocky outcrop provides you with a panoramic view to the south, west and north. To the south, you'll see Tussey Mountain stretching onward as it makes its way toward the Old Line State. Just west of the mountain you'll see the wooded hills that border the Lower Trail, following the Frankstown Branch of the Juniata River. Agricultural Canoe

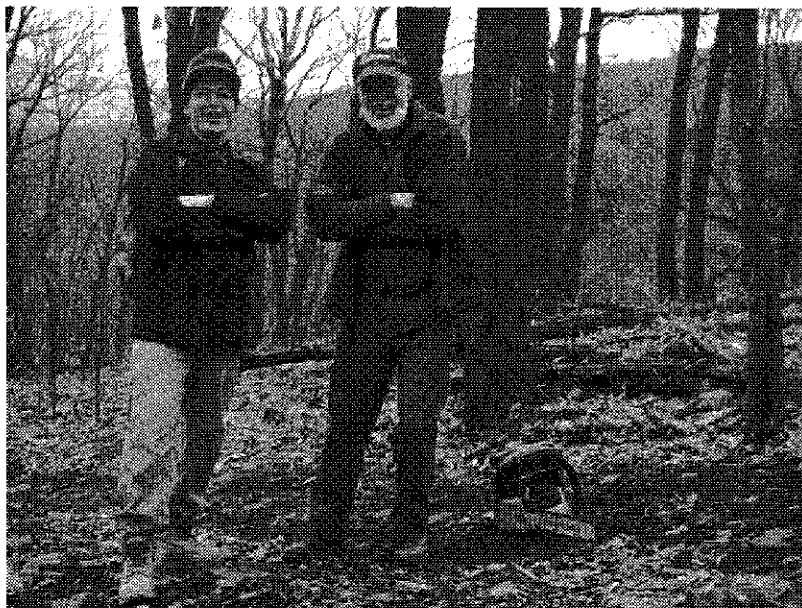
Valley, through which Route 22 runs, borders Canoe Mountain, the ridge that you will face as you look to the southwest, and which stops at the northern end of Sinking Valley. Immediately below you, at the foot of the mountain, are the Little Juniata River and its attendant railroad tracks winding through a wooded valley stretching westward to the Brush Mountain/Bald Eagle Ridge junction. Beyond that ridge looms the Allegheny Front,



*Noted conservationist Ed Perry (left) and Dr. Stan Kotala on the MST at the border of the Little Juniata Natural Area. Canoe Valley can be seen in the distance.*

which is dominated by State Game Lands and the Moshannon State Forest. And to the north is the southern end of Nittany Valley with its mixture of forest and agricultural fields.

After taking in lunch and this spectacular view, continue following the orange blazes downward and southward, toward the river. You will see evidence of old quarrying operations, now being reclaimed by the forest, and you'll be treated to some dizzying views from high above the Little Juniata, perhaps getting eye-level photos of the ospreys that are now migrating through our region. The descent is gradual and you will soon be at the Little Juniata Natural Area parking lot and your car, having enjoyed the most interesting segment of the MST. Don't forget to pick up the vehicle that you left at Colerain Road!



*JVAS Conservation Chair Dr. Stan Kotala and Ed "Chainsaw" Perry enjoy a laugh after a day of grueling work on the MST.*

***JVAS Conservation Chair Dr. Stan Kotala will lead a 3-mile-long hike on the Mid State Trail from Colerain Road south to the Little Juniata Natural Area on Sunday, November 2,. Meet at the Little Juniata Natural Area parking lot at noon. Call Dr. Stan Kotala at 946-8840 or email him at [ccwiba@keyconn.net](mailto:ccwiba@keyconn.net) for more information.***

A map of the area is online at [http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/forestry/stateforests/images/fd05\\_05.gif](http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/forestry/stateforests/images/fd05_05.gif)

# Bubble Trails

*By Heidi Mullendore*

Tapping my way across the smooth ice across the stream channel, I was amazed at the transformation that had happened in a few weeks. A short while ago, the landscape was rich with all the textures and colors of autumn and the last days of the warm season. In just a brief span, however, late fall rains had stripped the trees, and temperatures had plunged into the teens. The initial skim of ice had thickened and expanded as winter had placed its final seal upon the lake.

I sat down, sequestering myself in the sere grasses along the lake edge, my orange vest uncomfortably scraping under my ears. Not a breath of wind was moving; only chickadees and goldfinches bounced along among the alders. A quick flash caught my eye; something moved under the ice -- an indistinct dark form weaving sinuously in the murky water.

The dark brown football sized shape eased along under the ice, silent in its under-ice world. It was a muskrat, *Ondatra zibethicus*, sampling plants along the lake shallows. As a few disreputable looking cardinals in the throes of molting scolded me from the bare shrubs, I leaned in to watch as the creature swam, its narrow tail zig-zagging behind it.

Even the most unassuming animals provide a unique array of adaptations to meet their circumstances; the muskrat is no exception. Only weighing 2-3 pounds, the vegetarian muskrat, like its familiar and much larger wetlands counterpart, the beaver, faces the cold-season challenge of living in a lodge and navigating a frigid and treacherous under-water world for food.



Musk rats aren't handsome, to my mind, looking rather like little old men hunched over as they hide in the marsh grasses. Their eyes are placed well back of a roman nose and their small ears are almost indistinct against their skull. In contrast, muskrats sport a beautiful brownish-auburn coat, which they tend carefully, grooming frequently.

These little marsh rats do not hibernate, and unlike beavers, do not cache food in winter. Thus they must forage, even while being iced in for the winter. This can make for trying conditions; swimming under the ice to find enough food while in competition with other muskrats feeding in the same area. Musk rats are found in lakes, ponds and other wetlands, but prefer marshes with their abundant vegetation and constant presence of water.

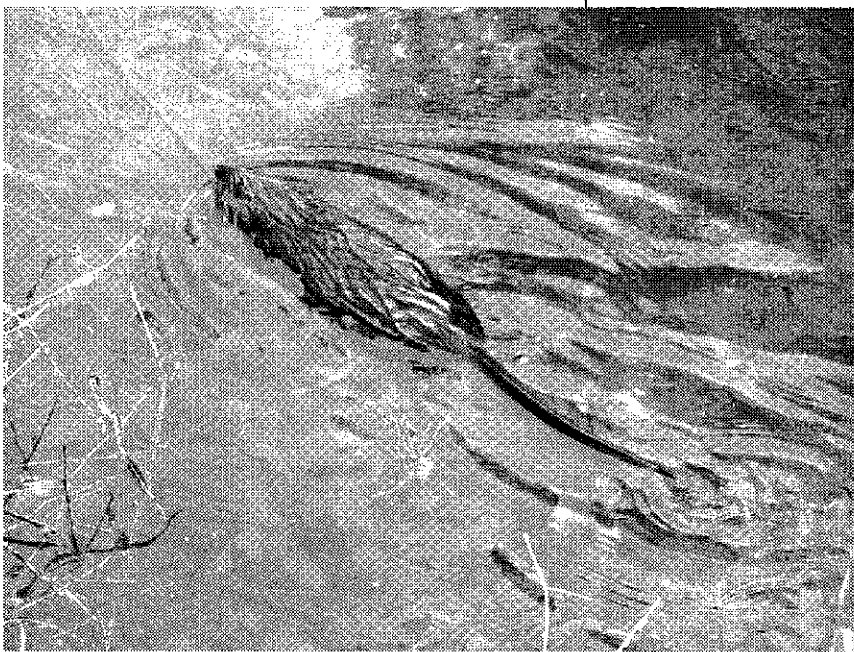
The trails along the lake showed inroads made by the thriving muskrat population. As I had hiked out this morning, I found it wise to keep my eyes on the trail, lest my foot plunge into a collapsed muskrat tunnel. Musk rats construct tunnels efficiently, a way of travel that keeps them out of the way of a passing mink, fox or coyote.

As I sat shivering, the winter cold seeping in relentlessly, the little muskrat worked its way under the ice and disappeared. I had watched the rat for only a minute or two at most, but muskrats can forage under the ice for 10 - 20 minutes at a time, a feat which continually baffles scientists.

From my perch I could see several shelters and push ups (piles of submerged plants heaped on the ice). Musk rats construct these stop-over shelters as freeze-up occurs. They also maintain trails through the muck and vegetation to make foraging easier. Feeding shelters are situated next to plunge holes -- an effective way of lengthening foraging distance while remaining safe from predators.

Through the brown and whispering cattails, I could see across the stream channel a mucky heap -- the main muskrat lodge. Musk rats build inelegant but effective lodges from mud and cattails, often forming solidly frozen walls a foot or so thick, with an entryway directly into the water.

The lodges are inconspicuous and mostly hidden but have a distinct feature -- no air hole. This peculiarity leaves biologists shaking their heads at how a muskrat lives on such little oxygen from being in a lodge with a high concentration of CO<sub>2</sub> from the respirations of the family of muskrats, to traveling underwater with little/no access to fresh oxygen.



ice nearer to the edges of the cove but it was still quite a distance for an underwater swim.

Even with the advantages of increased oxygen storage and blood volume, grooming, body fat and feeding shelters, muskrats still far outstrip biologists' carefully calculated expectations for foraging distance.

The ice that had sealed in the cove in such a short time was only a few inches thick at most, but was only clear in a few spots. Fist-sized bubbles, flattened under the ice, marked some of the muskrat feeding trails. In studies, muskrats have been observed inhaling air from these bubbles, possibly extending their abilities to travel under the ice. Muskrats have been observed to release air stored in their lungs and fur, forming bubbles under the ice, then using these bubbles for air sources when foraging.

Indeed, muskrats are tolerant of higher levels of  $CO_2$ , and go through seasonal changes that adapt them for life in the cold. Aside from the obvious thickening of their coat and the build up of body fat, muskrats undergo a seasonal increase in blood volume and their blood becomes 'better equipped' to hold more oxygen; both of these adaptations answer the unique challenge of getting enough oxygen during a season where oxygen availability is low.

In addition, muskrats face the age-old winter challenge of staying warm. Grooming their fur with thick oils helps keep water from the skin, but it only is part of the answer. Muskrats have been found to raise their core body temperatures for the season, as well as being able to temporarily raise their core body temperature just before a dive. They even show the same constriction of vessels in the tail and feet that slow heat loss in other cold-water animals. These seasonal and daily adaptations work in concert to counteract the extreme heat loss faced by a small animal exposed to frigid water for long periods at a time.

Looking out over the ice, I stretched and stood, stamping my feet, trying to get warm again. The stream channel flowing into the lake opened up and widened out. Here I could come see great blue herons, turtles on logs, green herons, water snakes, and all manners of fish and frog. Just a month before I had seen a snapping turtle with a foot-wide carapace slowly cruising the shallows and catching the last warming rays of the season.

The shallows were large, but had to support several families of muskrats for a good four months of under-ice foraging on the rootstocks of aquatic plants. When the ice was clear it was easy to make out muskrat trails winding their way clear across the channel. Push ups and feeding shelters dotted the

As the gray cloud cover began to break, revealing stripes of intense winter blue, I turned and began to trudge back through the lumpy marsh trail. Stepping over more muskrat tunnels and holes, I shook my head at the amazingly complex set of adaptations packaged in the unassuming little brown rat. Somewhere, in one of the lodges secreted among the marsh grasses, the muskrat had emerged from the freezing water into the dark of its mud lodge and begun vigorously grooming to warm itself again. Its kin would help in the grooming, chuckling and grunting among themselves in their peculiar chatter.

The young muskrats would learn to groom and where to forage, and even how to access bubble trails. And during the cold months in their dark homes, they would huddle together against the cold and wait for the return of the warm season.



# JVAS Field Trip to Whitetail Wetlands, Bedford County

## September 20, 2008

Restoring the ecological functions of about a hundred acres of over-used farmland is the goal of Whitetail Wetlands, a unique and visionary bed and breakfast in Bedford County.

The landscape of Whitetail Wetlands was barren and devoid of trees and other natural vegetation when the property was purchased by its current owners about two decades ago.

Since the land was adjacent to Dunning's Creek and had been previously drained for agriculture, the new owner decided to restore the natural functions of the landscape.

With the help of the US Fish and Wildlife Service, Ducks Unlimited, and Audubon, ten impoundments were created to capture water moving towards the creek from the ridge on the western border of the property.

This landscape features areas that are always wet, the impoundments; areas that are sometimes wet, the marshes and vernal pools; and places that are rarely wet, fields and dikes.

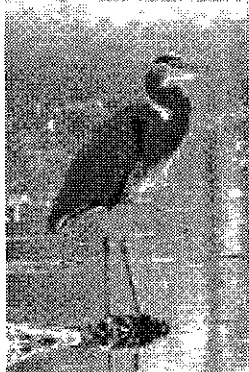
This environment serves as a perfect home and sanctuary for thousands of species of waterfowl, songbirds, amphibians, mammals and insects.

Lodging is available to those who prefer the uncommon and the extraordinary in a warm and gracious setting. The restored 1840 farmhouse that is the lodge features wildlife mo-

tifs with bird images appearing on everything from the curtains to the furnishings, to the soap dishes. Fine wildlife art graces the walls of every room. There are unexpected amenities and genuine hospitality with rooms appointed with a combination of antiques and modern convenience.

You'll find more than a dozen miles of trails through mature forests and paths winding through beautiful wetlands. Blinds for observation and photography can be found at strategic locations.

During JVAS' visit to the Whitetail Wetlands in September, JVAS members Mike and Laura Jackson, Bob and Georgia Bottenfield, Terry and Debbie Wentz, Stan and Alice Kotala, Mary Paoli, Mabel Michael, Warren Baker, and Dan Sinal were given an introduction to the wetlands by Connie Hunt, the site's resident manager, who discussed the history of Whitetail Wetlands, its ecology, and plans for the future.



*Great blue heron.  
200+ species of  
birds have been  
recorded at  
Whitetail Wetlands.*



*Photo by Stan Kotala*

Afterwards, the JVAS members walked the trails and observed shorebirds, waterfowl, songbirds, and raptors. Wildflower experts Mabel Michael and Mary Paoli pointed out stunningly beautiful purple-stemmed asters and New England asters as well as examples of wetland plants such as buttonbush and winterberry holly.

*JVAS congratulates the owners and manager of Whitetail Wetlands for their vision and perseverance in restoring the landscape of this fascinating and ecologically valuable site!*

We encourage you to visit Whitetail Wetlands on the web at

[www.whitetailwetlands.com](http://www.whitetailwetlands.com)

Whitetail Wetlands  
967 Dunning's Creek Rd.  
P.O. Box 368  
New Paris, PA 15554  
814-839-2622  
[wwetlands@pennswoods.net](mailto:wwetlands@pennswoods.net)

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

*"Ghost House" Robert Frost*



*Photo by (not of) Stan Kotala*

*Snapping turtles and painted turtles reside in the many impoundments at Whitetail Wetlands, near Pleasantville*

# Old Growth Forests bank MORE Carbon Dioxide

*Once most forests get more than 15 years old they absorb more carbon dioxide than they release, and continue doing so for centuries.*

A group of forest scientists from the United States and Europe reports that a growing body of evidence settles an old question over whether old growth forests store more carbon dioxide from the atmosphere than they release.

Based on a review of research from more than 500 forest sites around the world, the answer, published in an online edition of the journal *Nature*, is that most forests between 15 and 800 years old store more carbon dioxide from the atmosphere than they release, and the total amounts to about 1 billion metric tons a year, or about 10 percent of the net carbon uptake worldwide.

The findings argue for including credit for preserving old growth forests in the Kyoto Protocol and cap-and-trade proto-

cols for controlling greenhouse gas emissions blamed for global warming.

At recent U.N. talks aimed at a new global warming treaty, delegates agreed that countries should be compensated for slowing or halting deforestation, and that countries where forests have largely been depleted should be rewarded for conserving and expanding their forest cover.

About 30 percent of the world's forests have not been significantly logged, and about half of that is in the boreal and temperal forests of the Northern Hemisphere. The review estimated that 1.3 billion metric tons, plus or minus 500 million metric tons, of carbon are absorbed by these forests annually.

## JVAS Field Trip to Alan Seeger Natural Area: Old Growth Eastern Hemlocks

The 390-acre Alan Seeger Natural Area along Standing Stone Creek highlights virgin white pine and hemlock. Towering above the trail as it winds through 20-foot-high rhododendrons is a hemlock forest bypassed by the loggers at the end of the 19th century. Here are magnificent trees, many several hundred years old and more than 4 feet in diameter. Scientists believe the largest tree in the area could be over 1,000 years old, possibly the oldest in the state. Some of the hemlocks occupy small islands in the middle of Stone Creek. Other very large tree species in the area include white oak, red maple, tuliptree, white pine, pignut hickory, black gum and black birch.

An old growth mixed-oak forest on the mountain slope above is considered to be one of the finest in Pennsylvania.

A half-mile nature trail leads into the heart of the old-growth forest while winding along Standing Stone Creek, and continuing through a younger forest of oaks, white pine and red maple. The Mid-State Trail also has a connection to this natural area.



### **JVAS FIELD TRIP: Saturday, NOVEMBER 22 – Alan Seeger Natural Area:**

***Witness old growth hemlocks in this Rothrock State Forest Natural Area. An easy hike among some of the largest trees you will see in the East. Meet at Trip leader Terry Wentz at Uncle Joe's Woodshed Parking Lot, Altoona, 9 am. Carpool to Huntingdon County – 1 hour drive. Or meet Stan Kotala at the Water Street Flea Market on Rt 22 at 9:30am. Bring bag lunch and drinks.***

***Leader: Terry Wentz 693-6563***

# News from the Pennsylvania Online Herpetological Atlas

By Dr. Tim Maret

After spending much of the summer out in the field looking for amphibians and reptiles, I spent much of last week updating the maps on the Pennsylvania Online Herpetological Atlas website (<http://webpace.ship.edu/tjmaret/herp.htm>). I made it through all of the species except for box and wood turtles. There is a lot more data for these two species than for any other species, and I probably won't have their maps updated until early September. Here are few interesting statistics:

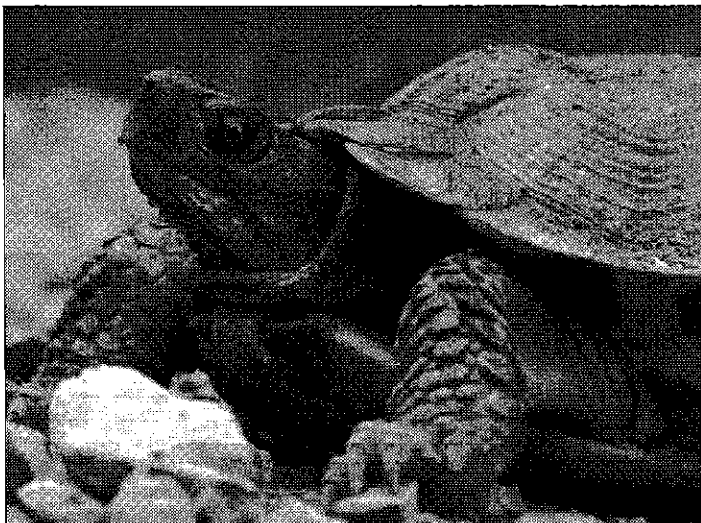
- *We have several new county records. I only counted it as a record if there was a photograph to allow positive identification. We have 3 new county records for the four-toed salamander, two for the marbled salamander, and one each for the queen snake and ribbon snake. Look at the distribution maps to see which counties.*
- *Besides the box and wood turtle, the top five species reported are: timber rattlesnakes (28), queen snakes (28), spotted turtles (14), four-toed salamanders (13), and Fowler's toads (12). Note that if you reported multiple individuals on the same day in the same place, it counted as a single submission.*
- *The mountain chorus frog has been found again in Pennsylvania! After about 30 years of no reports, we have had three reports to the atlas project (2 with photos).*
- *There is a disturbing absence of reports for some of the frog species. We have absolutely no recent submissions for the other chorus frogs (New Jersey, upland, western) or cricket frog. People I talk to are just not seeing them. Not too long ago, they used to be common.*
- *The large number of reports of box and wood turtles is encouraging. Although the consensus seems to be that they are not as common as they used to be, they appear to be doing well in some areas.*

This fall, I'll have a student assistant helping me again. This should allow me to keep the webpage and maps to date and respond more quickly to questions and comments. Every once in a while, the university's spam detector seems to grab a random e-mail or submission. I try to catch these, but I'm sure I miss a few (I'm sure I also misplace a few myself). If you don't see your submission on the map, or didn't hear back from me on a question or concern, please let me know. I have about a dozen pictures that were submitted without any information, and have no way of knowing who they came from.

I'll be updating the photo page soon. If you haven't looked at it, you really should! We have some great herp photographers out there. If you have any pictures you want to add, just e-mail them to me. They do not have to be species of concern. Give me until early September to get them posted. If I post your photo(s), it is with your permission. You still retain the copyright.

If you look at the updated maps, you may notice that they look fuzzy or are missing lines. If that is the case, click on the map. The map should show up at its full size, and the images should clear up. I don't know enough about webpage design to correct this.

Finally, I want to express my gratitude to all of you who are participating in this project and emphasize its importance. For many of these species, this is the only data being gathered on their abundance and distribution. The information that you submit is forwarded to the Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program, where it is made available to state agency personnel for planning and conservation purposes. With that in mind, I'd like to ask your help in increasing the participation. Please share the webpage with your friends and colleagues, and encourage them to submit information. Now that the late summer heat has set in and most of the herps are hiding, please take the time to submit your findings from this spring and summer.



As always, I'd love to hear your comments and suggestions. One of the fun aspects of the project has been answering questions and trying to ID critters in some of the photos that have been sent. So please keep in touch.

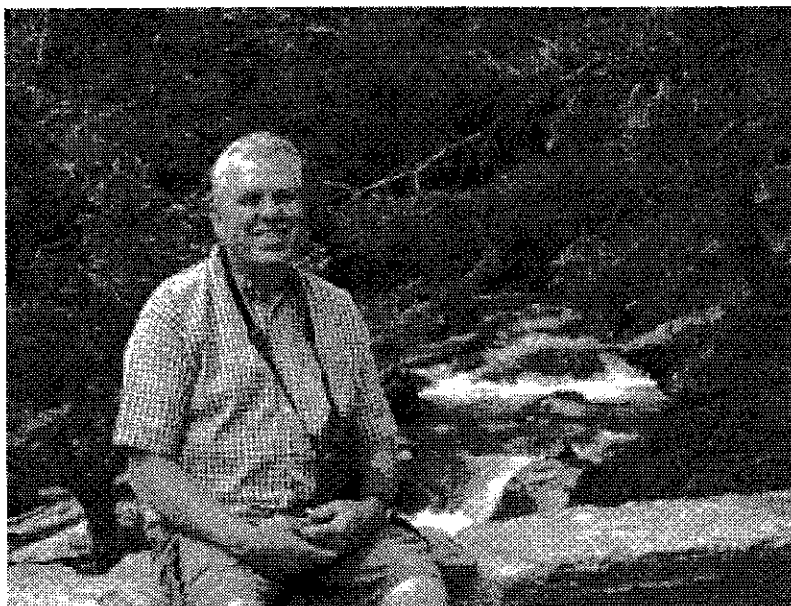
<http://webpace.ship.edu/tjmaret/herp.htm>

Wood Turtle by Dr. Stan Kotala

## FROM THE GNATCATCHER'S NEST

I am sure by now that you are sick of the presidential campaign and all the rhetoric. I have always been interested in politics at all levels and had even considered running for local office prior to my retirement from my career as a State Park Manager. After realizing how much anguish local elected officials must endure from citizens, I decided one public career was enough. As a state employee, I was not permitted to express opinions about candidates nor felt comfortable working actively on any of their

campaigns. Since retirement some of my friends have noticed that I can be very vocal about some candidates and issues. So, I decided to express some opinions.



First, I am very disappointed how the candidates were picked this year. If you think you had much influence with your vote in the primary elections, take a look again. Instead, the media has selected the candidates and now has selected the winner before anyone even votes. In 45 some years of watching presidential campaigns, I have never seen this kind of action with pollsters deciding who the winner is before any votes have been cast. I think polls should be banned. In past years it was decided that voting results could not be released nation wide until voting places are closed on the west coast. Second, candidates should be required to spend only money given to them through the tax write-off on the IRS forms, public funding for presidential campaigns. This fund raising stuff has really gotten out of hand, finance reform, right! So much for my observations.

Here is something cute the National Wildlife Federation asked the Presidential candidates and their replies.

**Q. If you could be an animal, which one would you choose and why?**

**A. John McCain** - If I were an animal I think I'd like to be a jaguar. **Barack Obama** - Americans love wildlife and I'm no exception. Pets are beloved companions for many, and Michelle and I have promised our daughters a dog when the campaign is over and we can properly care for it. Healthy wildlife are critical components of healthy ecosystems and the love of wildlife provides a deep connection to the natural world.

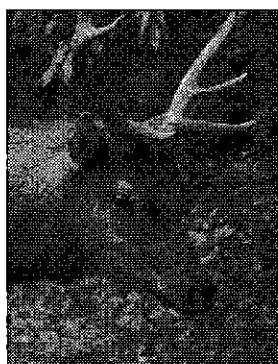
So what does this tell you about the candidates? Neither can answer the question completely or correctly. Please vote for your choice on November 4, don't let the media decide this election!

*Terry*

# ***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 eNews editor Dr. Stan Kotala at [ccwiba@keyconn.net](mailto:ccwiba@keyconn.net) to subscribe to our free news service.

## **JVAS THANKS ITS CORPORATE SPONSORS**



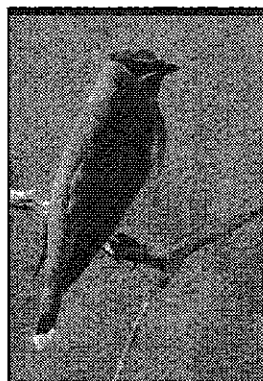
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 Certified Environmental Teacher  
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 Tyrone, PA 16686

Phone (814) 684-2425  
[creatureteach@aol.com](mailto:creatureteach@aol.com)

# 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

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**P.O. Box 148**

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## JVAS BOARD MEMBERS

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twentz2@verizon.net

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Secretary.....Charlie Hoyer      684-7376

charma77@verizon.net

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Education.....Jody Wallace      684-2425

creatureteach@aol.com

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twentz2@verizon.net

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Hospitality.....Georgia Bottenfield      832-2273

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charma77@verizon.net

### COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Membership..... Dr. Alice Kotala      946-8840

ccwiba@keyconn.net

Programs.....Dave Bonta      (see above)

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

### DIRECTORS

CBC Coordinator.....Heidi Mullendore      949-9302

hboyle@state.pa.us

SOAR Representative....Laura Jackson      652-9268

mljackson@hughes.net

## NOTE NEW MEETING LOCATION BELOW

### NOVEMBER PROGRAM

NOVEMBER 18 – Ben Cramer, **Pennsylvania Hiking for All Ages and Interests**: Join the editor of *Pennsylvania Hiking Trails* (13th Ed.) for a talk about the benefits of hiking and some of the best trails in the Juniata Valley area.

### ANNUAL CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

*DECEMBER 20 Saturday - Spend the day in the field and enjoy fellowship at the Hoyer's Mt. Charma Estate for a covered dish supper and bird count for the day.*

*Coordinator: Heidi Mullendore 949-9302*

*Hosts: Marge and Charlie Hoyer 684-7376*

**PLEASE NOTE NEW JVAS MEETING LOCATION BELOW.**

### NOVEMBER/DECEMBER FIELD TRIPS

NOVEMBER 2 Sunday – **Mid State Trail** Join JVAS Conservation Chair Dr. Stan Kotala on a challenging 3-mile-long hike on the Mid State Trail, from Colerain Road south to the Little Juniata Natural Area. Wear sturdy boots. Bring snacks and water. Meet Stan (946-8840 or ccwib@a@keyconn.net) at the Little Juniata Natural Area parking lot at 12 noon.

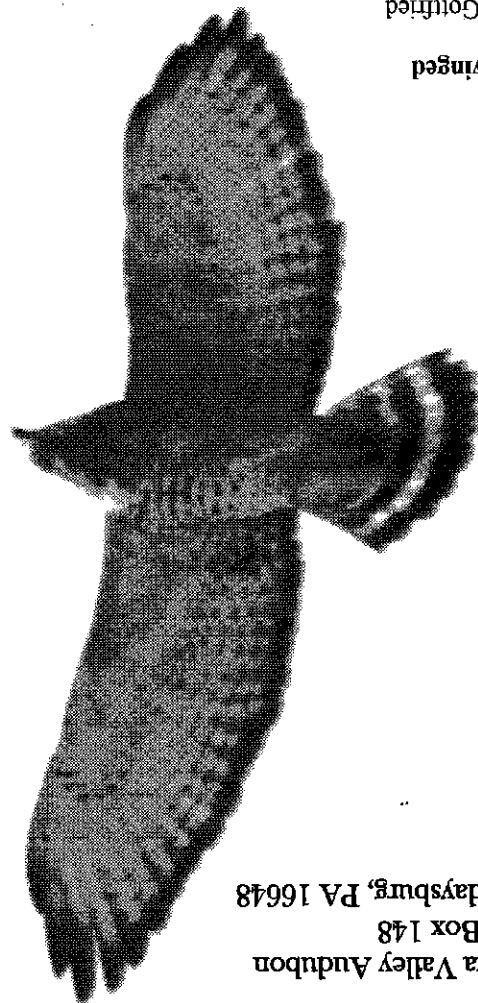
NOVEMBER 22 Saturday – **Alan Seeger Hemlocks Area** Witness old growth hemlocks in this State Forest Natural Area. An easy hike among some of the largest trees you will see in the East. Meet Terry Wentz (693-6563) at Uncle Joe's parking lot, Altoona, 9 AM, or meet Stan Kotala (946-8840) at the Water Street Flea Market on Rte 22 at 9:30 AM. Bring bag lunch and drinks.

**ABOUT JVAS PROGRAMS:** Programs are presented on the *third Tuesday of each month, September through May (except December)*. They begin at 7 PM in the **BELLWOOD-ANTIS PUBLIC LIBRARY**. Take the Bellwood Exit off I-99, go straight thru the traffic light at the Sheetz intersection, proceed about 4 blocks and turn right just before crossing the railroad overpass. Turn left at the next intersection, another 2 blocks and the library is on the right.

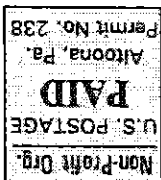
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**New Meeting Location! Bellwood Library!**