DEP chief Hanger axes Stream Buffer Proposal!

DEP Acting Secretary John Hanger has announced that the DEP no longer plans to move forward with regulations requiring buffers on all streams. Instead, the DEP plans to ask developers to leave buffers along streams on a voluntary basis.

Juniata Valley Audubon believes that a voluntary program is not good enough. It will have a very limited impact on water quality in our state and is not an adequate substitute for a statewide requirement. DEP already has a voluntary program in place — its Stormwater BMP Handbook includes an incentive program that provides credits to developers who include buffers in their site design. However, this sort of voluntary program will only end up generating buffers on a small number of streams in the state, leaving the vast majority of our streams still at risk of pollution, erosion and flooding due to stormwater runoff.

In addition, DEP’s proposal to eliminate its review of stormwater plans for developers who include buffers is illegal and a bad idea that could lead to even further degradation of our streams.

Along with protecting wildlife habitat, streamside forest buffers help to reduce problems with nitrogen, phosphorus and sediment levels that plague streams throughout the Chesapeake region. Buffers should be forested, not simply "vegetated," with native species, and that the developer should be responsible for maintaining the buffer for five years, which is the duration of the permit. Forest buffers slow the speed of stormwater runoff, providing more time for vegetation to trap sediment and for their roots to absorb pollutants. The process not only improves water quality, but also decreases erosion and flooding. The Chesapeake Bay Program has set a goal to buffer 70 percent of all streams in the Bay watershed.

Pennsylvania should require forested buffers of at least 100 feet on both sides of every stream in our state...with 150 feet on small headwater streams and 300 feet on Exceptional Value and High Quality streams. Buffers will reduce pollution of our streams, limit erosion of stream banks, improve habitat for fish and keep streams cooler. They will also increase property values for nearby properties, and cut stormwater management costs and drinking water treatment costs. And they will reduce damage from flooding, which costs $6 billion a year.

To date, 127 organizations support Buffers 100. American Rivers, the Chesapeake Bay Foundation and Clean Water Action are among the regional endorsers, along with scores of Pennsylvania-based conservation groups and local-level watershed organizations.

We need your help over the coming weeks to flood Governor Rendell with letters and faxes urging him to support a mandatory buffer rule.

1. Please write to Governor Ed Rendell and tell him that we need a mandatory buffers program, not a voluntary one. Remind him how important buffers are for improving water quality and stopping flooding.

2. Tell him that DEP’s plan to eliminate its review of stormwater plans is a bad idea that will cause more pollution and flooding and degrade our streams. Second, please encourage as many of your members as possible to write the Governor too. The Homebuilders Association has been busy lobbying against our Buffers plan; now we need to turn up the heat in support of a mandatory buffers rule.

Letters should be sent to

Governor Ed Rendell
225 Main Capitol
Harrisburg PA 17120

or you can fax them to him at 717-772-8284.

"The river is by far the most attractive highway."

- Henry David Thoreau
151 acre Warriors Mark Run Forest protected with Conservation Easement

Last month ClearWater Conservancy completed its eleventh conservation easement and its first in Huntingdon County. This conservation easement protects a 151-acre forested property in Franklin Township, Huntingdon County, Pennsylvania. Donated by owners Jim McCorkel and his sisters Betty Ann Jansson and Mary Lou Rozdilsky, the conservation easement not only keeps intact a large forest block, but also protects a portion of Warriors Mark Run, a major tributary of Spruce Creek, a High Quality Cold Water Fishery.

The property was purchased by Roy and Betty McCorkel, parents of the donors, in 1940 to build a cabin to enjoy and to protect the natural resources that a forested property had to offer. The McCorkels would travel from Long Island every summer to vacation, and over the years a community of cabins grew, with friends and families bonding tightly with each other and the land.

Ever aware of their unique possession, the family has worked to make the property a haven for wildlife by encouraging the creation and maintenance of varied wildlife habitats. They have worked with representatives of the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Bureau of Forestry, and the Pennsylvania Game Commission to develop forest management and wildlife management plans. Family and friends have recently joined together for a tree planting to maintain a healthy habitat for wildlife.

Jim McCorkel explained that “the conservation easement fulfills a dream of our parents to protect the beauty of the woods and preserve the sense of quiet that you get when you go there.” His wife Liz commented that “it was the right thing to do.”

The McCorkel Tree Farm has a notable relationship with the National Grove of State Trees in Washington, D.C. The Grove is a display of trees representing the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Pennsylvania’s officially designated state tree, the eastern hemlock (Tsuga canadensis), was chosen for the National Grove of State Trees from a beautiful stand of maturing hemlock at the McCorkel Tree Farm in the mid-1980s. There are some very old 100’ trees on the property. According to Jim, the property hasn’t been cut over since 1897.

With the addition of the McCorkel Tree Farm conservation easement, ClearWater Conservancy now protects more than 1,300 acres with conservation easements. Seven hundred of these 1,300 acres have been added since June of 2007. This success could not happen without the generous donations of landowners such as Jim, Betty Ann, and Mary Lou. ClearWater also thanks the family for a generous donation to the ClearWater Conservancy Stewardship Fund that enables ClearWater to protect this property in perpetuity.

Above: Limestone outcrop on the McCorkel property
Left: Warrior’s Mark Run
New Stroud Center Study Supports Stronger Headwater Stream Protection

A new report by the Stroud Water Research Center of Avondale, Pennsylvania presents evidence regarding the ecological significance of headwater streams and their importance to healthy stream and river ecosystems downstream. The report is based on findings from 40 years of data on headwater streams in the White Clay Creek watershed, and other analysis. The paper describes the special nature of headwater streams, the critical role they play in stream ecosystems, their sensitivity and vulnerability to human disturbance, and the role that forested riparian buffers play in protecting headwaters.

The findings of the report are as follows:

- **Headwater streams are “repositories” of biodiversity**
  Aquatic macroinvertebrates are the most abundant animals in headwater streams. Stroud Center scientists have identified 298 species of macroinvertebrates from the headwaters of the White Clay Creek. More than one-third of those species are pollution-sensitive, and roughly one-third of those species are “headwater specialists”, found exclusively or predominantly in headwater streams. This species richness is due to the environmental conditions found in headwater streams.

- **Headwater streams contribute essential nourishment to downstream aquatic life**
  Bacteria in headwater streams break down organic matter such as leaf litter and provide essential sources of food for insects and fish downstream. The processing of organic matter is 33% greater in first-order streams than in the next larger downstream reaches. And spring seeps, where streams originate from groundwater meeting the soil surface, are as much as three times more productive than higher order streams in contributing organic matter to downstream waters.

- **Headwater stream ecosystems, with all their complexity, can be found in small drainage basins**
  Small watersheds can support permanently flowing and intermittent streams. Stroud scientists have found watersheds with perennally flowing springs and first-order streams ranging in size from 5.5 to 37 acres in the White Clay and Brandywine Creek drainages. **This finding “contrasts sharply” with Pennsylvania’s waiver from permit requirements for disturbances to streams draining 100 acres or less.**

- **Headwater streams are particularly sensitive and vulnerable to human disturbances**
  Stroud scientists have “consistently found that pollution-sensitive species such as mayflies, caddisflies and stoneflies are lost in headwater streams as adjacent land use is gradually converted from forest to agricultural or urban/suburban development.”

- **Forest buffers are protective of headwater stream health**
  Stroud studies have found that “small stream reaches bordered by forest have more macroinvertebrates, total ecosystem processing of organic matter, and nitrogen uptake per unit channel length than contiguous forested reaches.”

The adoption of stream buffer regulations by local municipalities is a top JVAS priority for 2009. If you would like to help with this effort, then please contact JVAS conservation chair Dr. Stan Kotala at ccwiba@keyconn.net or 946-8840.
Flight of the Timberdoodle graces early Spring Skies

By Dr. Stan Kotala

Lengthening days and warming temperatures bring the voices of spring peepers, wood frogs, and migrating swans and geese to central Pennsylvania. A lesser-known herald of spring, the timberdoodle, also begins performing its springtime ritual at this time of year. Timberdoodle is one of the aliases of the American woodcock, a member of the wading bird family which includes snipe, plovers and killdeer.

The woodcock is a rather odd-looking bird with its brown, black and buff mottled plumage, and large eyes set far back on its head and long bill. The sexes are similar in appearance, with females being a little larger and having a slightly longer bill.

Woodcock are usually solitary, not forming flocks. They are active during daylight and, periodically, nighttime hours. During the daytime, they are usually found in moist, young forests with adequate understory where they use their long, flexible-tipped bill to probe for the earthworms that make up the bulk of their diet. They also consume various insect larvae, ants, crickets, and beetles. During the night, they use nearby fields and openings to roost, feed and mate.

The best opportunity to get a glimpse of the timberdoodle is from March till May. During this time of year, around dawn or dusk, and sometimes throughout the night if the moon is bright, males will frequent the fields and openings near moist woodland habitat to perform courtship displays. During the display, the male begins making a "peent" sound on the ground for about a minute which is followed by his spiraling to several hundred feet above ground while creating a twittering sound with his wings. He then descends, making a chirping sound, landing at the point of takeoff. The sequence is then repeated, and the entire display may last up to 45 minutes.

Most people have access to woodcock habitat, be it private or public. If you are unfamiliar with this bird or have never witnessed its courtship display, it is worth the effort to get acquainted.

Some excellent places to observe the woodcock’s ritual include Bald Eagle State Park, the Woodcock Trail in the Stone Valley Recreation Area in northern Huntingdon County, and Canoe Creek State Park in Blair County.

On Saturday, March 21 Juniata Valley Audubon www.jvas.org will host a walk to observe the flight of the timberdoodle at Canoe Creek State Park, near Hollidaysburg, Blair County. The park has a variety of wetlands and old fields that provide ideal habitat for woodcock. Meet at Pavilion 1 in the park at 6:30 p.m.

Alternatively, you can explore woodcock habitat on your own by following the Woodcock Trail in the Stone Valley Recreation Area http://www.forestryexplorer.psu.edu/walkingtours/woodcock.html just off of Charter Oak Road in northern Huntingdon County. The Charter Oak Woodcock Demonstration Area is being managed to provide woodcock with habitat requirements for breeding, nesting, and migration. Points marked along the orange-blazed demonstration trail show suitable cover types and management practices that enhance woodcock habitat. The trail is less than 1 mile long.
Dear membership of the Canoe Creek Volunteer Lake Monitoring Program;

First, let me thank you for your participation over the last two years in the Citizen Volunteer Monitoring Program (CVMP) on Canoe Lake at Canoe Creek State Park. As you know, this program has been a joint effort of both the DCNR and the DEP, and your group was the first to do this work in a State Park. We have collected valuable data due to your efforts.

This program has exceeded expectations. We have 5 sampling events, data collection at a total of 10 sampling stations, and data from 15 sampling points. DEP considers anything over 12 points to be a complete, and interpretable, set of data. In fact, in DEP’s program design, lakes rarely sample for more than one year.

The data we have already collected will allow us to have a solid baseline of data. This data can be used in the short-term to determine the areas of water quality concern on Canoe Lake, and, should development occur, we have this data as a baseline against which we can measure any changes in Canoe Lake. Should development activity, or other significant changes in Canoe Lake, present themselves; we could begin CVMP activities again.

Again, let me thank you for your work over the last two years, and your continued stewardship of the resources of the Juniata Valley area, and Canoe Creek State Park in particular. Your contributions to the park are invaluable and numerous. Lastly, let me thank you personally for helping me to get this program off the ground and as a result I have taken this program to numerous other parks.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you notice any changes in Canoe Lake or it’s watershed that might be of concern.

It has been a pleasure to work with you all.

Sincerely,

Andy St. John
Park Manager
Resources Management Section
PA Bureau of State Parks

Canoe Lake monitor Tom Harvey preserves a water sample.

JVAS president and Canoe Lake monitor Terry Wentz looks out over the lake. Terry served as the DCNR Manager of Canoe Creek State Park for close to three decades.

JVAS Canoe Lake monitors Dr. Alice Kotala and Tom Harvey enjoy the view over the lake after a monitoring session.
Harbinger of Spring

By Heidi Mullendore

Sliding through the muck, my boots made slow squelching sounds as I waded in the mud to peer into the purple spathes of skunk cabbage. This early-March day showed some promise of spring, the air warming to the mid-50s. Hatches of tiny midges danced over boggy areas still rimed with ice, the creek burbled vigorously with snowmelt and red tails and vultures spiraled lazily in the morning sun.

The month of March teases us with the flow and ebb of spring. With each advance comes another sign that the warm season is gaining ground. On this day the forest still offered little sign of spring greening. Dull trunks of brown and gray washed in weak sunshine patterned the hillside. Only the early furled leaves of the skunk cabbage provided relief from the drab hues.

As I wiped my hands on my knees and rose stiffly from the muck, a movement caught my eye. Through the trunks glided a dark velvety butterfly, alighting on a trunk ringed with rows of sapsucker holes. It was a Mourning Cloak, a beautiful purplish-brown butterfly, one of the earliest butterflies to take wing. At three inches it is one of our more noticeable butterflies; its name comes from its resemblance to the traditional cloak once worn for mourning. Despite its forlorn name, the butterfly was a welcome sight to my winter dulled senses.

As I dug in my backpack for my binoculars the insect turned and angled down the trunk to take its fill from the sapsucker holes, its soft silky wings gleaming in the sunlight. Adjusting my focus, I could see the irregular margins of its wings with their short projections. In the sunlight, the wide pale-yellow border gleamed and I could just make out the line of royal blue spots next to the yellow band.

The Mourning Cloak is a Brushfooted butterfly, so named because of its small forelegs which look like brushes. They are among the few butterflies that overwinter as adults, seeking shelter in woodpiles, under tree bark, or tucked away in tree cavities. These bewitching butterflies wait out winter’s below-freezing temperatures by producing natural antifreeze called sorbitol that prevents the formation of ice crystals in their bodily tissues.

Interestingly enough, this antifreeze is only produced as temperatures fall in the autumn months—if you put a summer Mourning Cloak in the freezer, its body would not be equipped with sorbitol and wouldn’t survive.

This alluring individual drinking sap in the March sun had spent the better part of its morning using its wings as thermal collectors to soak up enough sunshine to become active. Basking raises the insect’s body temperature sufficiently enough for flight, allowing it to set out to find sustenance from sap, animal droppings, puddles or even nectar from early flowers.

Having finished its repast, the Mourning Cloak turned and angled its elegant wings to the sun, pausing to bask. As it slowly opened and closed its wings it revealed the dull underside of the wings—the grayish patterns that resemble tree bark. Most butterflies take advantage of such natural camouflage when resting—better to blend in with leaves and bark than to attract predators with bright colors and patterns.

In the unstable days of early spring, Mourning Cloaks will alternately take shelter or come out to bask and feed. As spring takes hold of the land it provides an increasing abundance of sap, flowers and fruit as nourishment for the butterflies.

After leaf out begins, the male Mourning Cloaks will perch in sunny spots to wait for females. Courtship is a brief, exuberant aerial affair with plenty of chasing. After mating the female lays a cluster of 20–30 eggs encircling a twig. The species food preference runs to willow, elm, poplar, hackberry, aspen and paper birch.
Once summer is in full swing and courtship and egg laying are done, the adults die. Due to their ability to overwinter, Mourning Cloaks are one of the longest lived butterflies, enjoying a long life of 10 - 11 months.

As their parents are ending their lives, the caterpillars stay together after hatching, feeding together in neat little rows. (If you happen upon the little bristly black caterpillars, it is interesting to see their defensive behavior. When disturbed, all the caterpillars will shake together, an effective deterrent for predators.) After several molts, the caterpillars split up and head off on their own, away from the accumulated evidence of their larval lives. Each caterpillar will molt once more before seeking a sheltered place to form its own chrysalis under overhanging leaves.

In its private retreat, the caterpillar spins a small anchor of silk, sheds its skin one last time, and attaches a small hook-like appendage called a cremaster to the silk. The new chrysalis hardens into an indistinct lumpy gray form, looking nothing like its larval form.

In less than two weeks, the amazing transformation from larva to adult is made within its innocuous protective bag. The adult struggles to emerge, spends a few hours pumping blood into its drying wings, and then sets out in its newly altered form. New adult Mourning Cloaks are pristine in form, their wing margins sporting a strong yellow band; their parent butterflies ending their lives are by now tattered and worn, the yellow band faded to a dull pale yellow or white.

As I watched through my binoculars, the butterfly basked for a few minutes, took it some more sap, fluttered off in the warming air to disappear around the bend in the creek. I saw two more Mourning Cloaks that day, one of which was missing a good portion of one hindwing, its flight ungainly and awkward.

As the warm season prospers, and green ripens the woods and fields, the insect population burgeons in a welcome swell of life. However, in all the bounty of the season, none stand out so well as that first harbinger of spring, the Mourning Cloak, as it graces the budding woods with its promise of life.

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**Information about the MOURNING CLOAK**

**Identification:** Short projections on both wings, borders irregular. Upperside is purple-black with a wide, bright yellow border on outer margins, and a row of iridescent blue spots at the inner edge of the border.

**Life history:** Overwintered adults mate in the spring, the males perching in sunny openings during the afternoon to wait for receptive females. Eggs are laid in groups circling twigs of the host plant. Caterpillars live in a communal web and feed together on young leaves, then pupate and emerge as adults in June or July. After feeding briefly, the adults estivate until fall, when they re-emerge to feed and store energy for hibernation. Some adults migrate south in the fall.

**Flight:** Usually one flight from June-July.

**Wing span:** 2 1/4 - 4 inches (5.7 - 10.1 cm).

**Caterpillar hosts:** Willows including black willow (*Salix nigra*), weeping willow (*S. babylonica*), and silky willow (*S. sericea*); also American elm (*Ulmus americana*), cottonwood (*Populus deltoides*), aspen (*P. tremuloides*), paper birch (*Betula papyrifera*), and hackberry (*Celtis occidentalis*). Older caterpillars wander about and may be found on plants that they do not eat.

**Adult food:** Mourning Cloaks prefer tree sap, especially that of oaks. They walk down the trunk to the sap and feed head downward. They will also feed on rotting fruit, and only occasionally on flower nectar.

**Habitat:** Because Mourning Cloaks roam and migrate, they are found almost anywhere that host plants occur including woods, openings, parks, and suburbs; and especially in riparian areas.

**Range:** All of North America south of the tundra to central Mexico; rarely in the Gulf States and peninsular Florida. Also native to temperate Eurasia. Comments: Adults live 10-11 months and may be our longest lived butterfly.
JVAS CAPE MAY FIELD TRIP IN APRIL

Juniata Valley Audubon Society is sponsoring a weekend field trip to the Cape May, N.J. / Lewes, DE. Area the weekend of April 24-26, 2009. We will be leaving from Uncle Joe’s Woodshed parking lot, Altoona at 5 P.M. Friday April 24 and returning to Altoona about 6 P.M. Sunday April 26. **Pre-paid reservations are required by April 16 and van space is limited to the first 10 people responding.** Cost for the trip is $150 per person double occupancy or $250 per person single occupancy. The cost includes van transportation, gas, and 2 nights in a motel. All personal food, admissions to museums, and ferry tolls are extra.

Cape May is one of the top birding spots in the EAST and this time of the year plays hosts to hundreds of thousands of shore birds, warblers, and other spring migrants. Shore birds stop over to take advantage of horseshoe crab eggs being washed ashore for a nutritious feeding frenzy. A great opportunity to see many lifetime shorebirds!

Call Terry Wentz at 814-693-6563 for reservations.

Payable to: Waxwing Associates
140 Queen Ann Dr.
Hollidaysburg, PA 16648

Greetings from the Sunshine State!

While most of the 450 JVAS members endured a long and cold winter here in the upper Juniata Valley, JVAS member John Betting kayak ed in the company of manatees in Florida.
FROM THE GNATCATCHER’S NEST

After this consistently cold and windy winter, I am really looking forward to spring, my favorite time of the year. I relish watching plants come to life again and the persistent singing of spring bird migrants and frogs. My wife and I heard wood frogs February 11th on that beautiful day when temperatures hit the 60’s; just prior to a quick change and lots of wind damage throughout the area. Other observers have seen signs of spring earlier than normal, so I am hoping spring weather will arrive before the calendar.

JVAS has some enjoyable field trips planned for this spring: try to participate in as many as possible. March 21 is an evening at Canoe Creek State Park watching the woodcock mating ritual. Those of us who have witnessed this always are amused at the antics the male woodcock displays to attract a mate. Too bad men don’t put on a display to attract their women friends or do they?

The April field trip is an entire weekend, April 24 – 26, in the Cape May New Jersey area. We will see thousands of shorebirds feeding on horseshoe crab eggs along the ocean and bay as they travel north; another spectacular display not to be missed. See the article on the upper half of the previous page for details.

Let’s skip to the month of June. An added JVAS event this year is a one day educational event to be held at Canoe Creek State Park called BIRDS, BATS, AND WILDFLOWERS. We will be taking advantage of the expertise of JVAS members to present a full day of programs that will highlight the wonderful features of Canoe Creek at this time of the year. There will be bird hikes, wildflower walks, a bluebird program, and bat programs from 8 AM to 9 PM on June 6th. You may want to spend the entire day at Canoe Creek or pick and chose the programs which are most interesting to you for an all day fee of $10 per person or $20 for a family. Proceeds will be used to enhance JVAS activities for local citizens. What a wonderful way to spend the day; learning from our local experts who have never all been assembled together at one time for such an event! Please get full details of this event from the rack card enclosed with this newsletter and spread the word to your friends. Anyone belonging to an organization with a newsletter that can send out this rack card in their newsletters please contact me for a supply.

A toast to the end of winter with JVAS!!

Terry
JVAS eNews is changing to a listserv format

Any JVAS member may use the listserv to send an email to all the subscribers (fellow JVAS members). Use it to inform other JVAS members of conservation issues, wildlife sightings, or to discuss nature-related topics, or just to ask questions.

To subscribe, send an email to this address:

JVAS-L-subscribe-request@lists.psu.edu

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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: 
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MARCH/APRIL PROGRAMS

March 17 — Bill Russell, “Wild Mushrooms of the Juniata Valley”

Join the author of Field Guide to the Wild Mushrooms of Pennsylvania and the Mid-Atlantic for an in-depth look at the fungi that share our woods.

April 21 — Dr. Stan Kotala, “Gardening for Wildlife”

Just in time for spring gardening season, an informative look at the best native plants for attracting birds and other wildlife. (Stan also will lead a walk at the JVAS June picnic to point out some of these plants “in person.”)

MARCH/APRIL FIELD TRIPS

Saturday, March 21 Flight of the Timberdoodle — Observe woodcock on their singing grounds at Canoe Creek State Park, near Hollidaysburg. CCSP has a variety of wetlands and old fields that provide habitat for woodcock nesting. Meet at Pavilion 1 in the park at 6:30 p.m. Leader: Dr. Stan Kotala, 946-8840.

Friday, Saturday, Sunday, April 24–26 Cape May Shore Birds — Join us for a trip to Cape May, New Jersey to observe migrating shore birds. Van service and two overnights. Leave Friday p.m. with return Sunday evening. Departure details and costs will be provided at a later date. Prepaid reservations required. See page 8 for more details.

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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