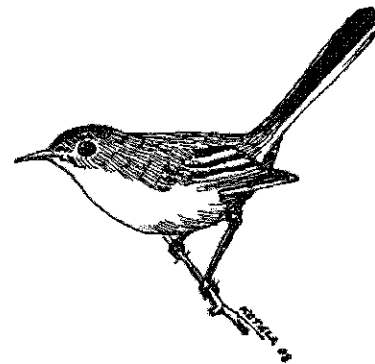


The Gnatcatcher

Newsletter of Juniata Valley Audubon

Volume 42 No. 4 September/October 2010



A Message from the JVAS President

By Dave Bonta

I was deeply saddened by the recent passing of Terry Wentz. It's difficult to over-estimate Terry's contribution to the cause of nature education and wildlife conservation in central Pennsylvania, both in his official capacity as park administrator and as a leader in volunteer organizations such as JVAS and Rails-to-Trails of Central Pennsylvania. It's thanks to Terry that our society has formed such a close relationship with Canoe Creek State Park, coinciding with the park's rise to prominence as an ecotourism and wildlife research destination for bats --- another, big part of Terry's legacy. I regret that I didn't get to know him as well as many of you did. I always appreciated his kind and fun-loving personality and the seeming ease with which he resolved conflicts and moved forward on projects that mattered to him.

Terry left big shoes to fill, and I don't know how the folks at Rails-to-Trails are dealing with that, but I can tell you that as his successor at JVAS it's very humbling. Fortunately, I have the support of some of our most capable members as fellow officers. Laura Jackson stepped in as vice-president and programs chair; Warren Baker agreed to stay on as treasurer for one last term (but is actively seeking a replacement whom he can begin to train); and Dr. Alice Kotala is our new secretary. Her husband the other Dr. Kotala -- Stan -- continues in his roles as conservation chair, newsletter editor, and frequent field trip leader. Deb Tencer has taken up the reins as field trip chair, and much to my surprise, my mom, Marcia Bonta, who served as JVAS president back in the 80s, volunteered for the hospitality chair position. Charlie Hoyer remains our webmaster and historian, and at our June meeting we also voted in two directors -- basically, an officer-at-large position: Elisabeth Kotala and Mike Jackson. We figured they were attending almost all the board meetings anyway, so it made sense to give them each a vote.

That's kind of the way I think things should happen at a volunteer organization like JVAS: the people who show up and show

interest get to decide what we do. If there's a nature-related issue we're not addressing and you think we should, speak up, and pretty soon you'll probably find yourself in charge of a new initiative. I think it's harder now than it's ever been to get people involved in clubs, nature-related or otherwise, but somehow we have to keep trying, because if we don't do it, no one else will.

Or so it sometimes seems. What can also happen, however, is that if one person steps forward, it will embolden a bunch of others and pretty soon we've got serious momentum. That's what happened this summer with the Heller Caves/Lower Trail-quarry issue, I believe. A couple of neighbors to the proposed quarry contacted us, we began to investigate and contact other groups and individuals, and in about a month we had an active coalition of 16 local and regional organizations hotly opposed to the quarry. By early August, with help from our friends in Audubon Pennsylvania, we'd located an environmental lawyer willing to work pro bono, Kenneth T. Kristl from Widener Law School, and filed suit to try and stop this unbelievably ill-considered, taxpayer-underwritten project. It's too bad we didn't have more time to mourn Terry, but in a way this battle feels like an *in memoriam* effort, given how much wildlife -- especially bats -- and the Lower Trail meant to him.

It would be nice to think that the welter of state and federal agencies charged with the protection of wildlife and the environment could coordinate better and avoid such travesties on their own, but as we all know, sometimes government doesn't quite work as advertised. Bureaucrats can only do so much on their own. They don't have the intimate knowledge of land and wildlife that local people do, and sometimes they need the assistance of civil society -- volunteer organizations such as JVAS -- to do their job right. Please consider supporting some of the other groups in the pro-Heller Caves coalition too, if you don't already, so together we can emerge from this battle stronger and ready for the next challenge.

In memoriam



Terry Wentz
1948-2010

A Visit to Mt. Logan Natural Area

By Helena Kotala

I first heard about Mt. Logan Natural Area last fall from a fellow hiker, and I only recently had the time to investigate this little-known wilderness near Lock Haven, PA. On Memorial Day weekend, I made the trip up there for a weekend of backpacking and exploring.

The road heading up Bald Eagle Mountain towards the natural area is quite bumpy and rocky, so I recommend using a four-wheel-drive vehicle. After parking in a small field on the left-hand side of the dirt road (called Kammerdiner Trail), we donned our packs and began walking the rest of the way up the road towards the trail that would take us to the top of the mountain. It was a hot, sunny day, and we began sweating almost immediately.

Soon, we spotted the blue blazes of the Winchester Trail on our right, and turned onto it. The trail became steep and rocky fairly quickly, but the blooming mountain laurel and songs of birds were enough to keep my mind off the discomfort of exertion. About halfway up the mountain, the trail turned into pure rock.

I had been warned about the high probability of seeing timber rattlesnakes, so I proceeded with caution and closely observed where I was placing my feet. Surprisingly, we did not see

one single snake on the trip, even though Mt. Logan Natural Area has been declared an amphibian and reptile protection area, as are all state forest natural areas.

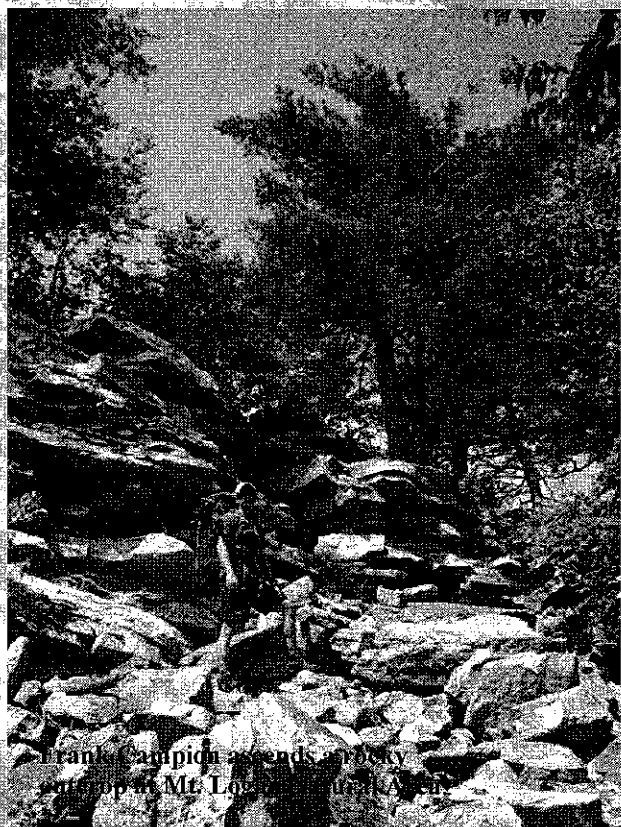
After about an hour and a half of vigorous hiking, we finally made it to the top of the mountain. The talus slope of Tuscarora quartzite was an impressive site, and we stopped for lunch at the top of the slope on some large, flat rocks. From the top of the mountain, you can either hike east or west along the ridgeline.

Hiking east will take you to the Natural Area and the old growth hemlocks. When I was there, I did not actually find the old growth, but from reading in *Natural Pennsylvania* by Charles Fergus, I found out that I probably did not hike far enough east. You are supposed to hike about 200 yards east along the ridge-top, and then hike about 100 yards north down the other side of the mountain. There isn't a trail there, so you will have to do some easy bush-whacking to get to the old growth stand.

The other option is to hike west along the ridge, following a trail that eventually fizzles out within about 100 yards. However, it is fairly easy to just walk through the woods along the ridgeline, and you may even get lucky and see a black vulture. We saw one who was apparently nesting in the talus slope, and it kept circling around us until we left its nesting area.

The area offers plenty of opportunities to explore as much as you would like, as Mt. Logan Natural Area is 512 acres surrounded by countless more acres of State Forest land. If you're feeling less adventurous or have a time crunch, you can always stop at the top of the mountain and turn right around and head back down, which still is a great day hike.

If you go: From State College, follow I-99 north to I-80. Travel east on I-80 to the exit for 220 North. Once on 220, travel slightly less than a mile, until you see SR 2008 on your right. Turn right and stay on this road for about 4 miles. The road will bend sharply to the left. Shortly after this bend, you will see East End Mountain Road on your right. Turn onto this road, which will eventually turn into gravel. After about 2 miles, there will be an intersection of three different roads. You can either park here, or make a hard left onto Kammerdiner Trail. If you take this road, a four-wheel-drive vehicle is highly recommended. Travel about 2.5 miles on Kammerdiner Trail until you see a grassy parking area at the bottom on a hill on your left. Park here and walk the rest of the way to Winchester Trail.



Frank Campion ascends a rocky trail up Mt. Logan Natural Area.

Through the Branches

By JVAS Field Trip Chair Deb Tencer

Summer turning into Fall

It's late August and I embrace the cool weather after a long hot summer. I sit drinking a warm tea, reflecting on my day after picking berries in a steady but refreshing rainfall. A short while ago I was at The Nature Conservancy's Brush Mountain Preserve. I have spent many days there this year and have walked the old logging roads numerous times. I enjoyed the fern fiddleheads in the early spring. I watched the blueberry plants grow heavy with their spring blossoms and anticipated picking the juicy berries later in the year. I enjoyed photographing the beautiful mountain laurels and azaleas and was filled with excitement upon finding a pink ladies slipper. Each plant, each change in nature marks a chapter of our lives and of our changing seasons.

When I spend time in the woods I am very content. A peacefulness always surrounds me, no matter how many times I visit the woods. Trails always beckon me and mountains call out to me to explore them. Butterflies create a child-like wonder in my heart. I always smile and wish I could chase the colorful butterflies as if I were a child again, carefree and uninhibited.

I was very lucky (and continue to be) this year. I have been given the gift of time. Time to pursue my hobbies, time to enjoy my life. I guess they call it retirement. Whatever it's called I sure appreciate it! It's great to listen and respond to nature whenever it beckons me. I can just turn off the automatic pilot of my day and venture out into nature. Nature has a way of slowing things down for me. Each moment becomes special. Time spent in the woods is like meditation to me. It's the ideal way of living in the moment.

Nature gives us so many gifts. We can share our connection with nature with close friends. It's an intimate way of sharing our lives with someone. Passing knowledge to each other, observing a hawk, or listening to a deer running in the woods makes the friendship grow stronger: the gift of knowledge, the gift of friendship, the gift of peacefulness, even the gift of food.

I spent so many hours this summer picking berries to make jam and freezing it for the long winter months. What tastes better than a perfectly ripe juicy blueberry when it's snowing outside?

I was lucky to be able to camp in the heart of Rothrock State Forest several times this past summer. I loved knowing that for days I could just spend my time hiking and relaxing and never needing to leave the forest to fulfill any of my needs. As I camped I made friends with the nature that surrounded me. Several butterflies enjoyed spending the afternoons with me.

They would sample my dogs rawhide. They enjoyed landing on my possessions and tasting the human traces of salt. A petite hummingbird visited daily hoping for a treat and curiously sampled my sun tea jar. A whip-poor-will's calls became a lullaby each night for me until the katydids drowned him out suddenly one summer evening. The smell of the damp woods, the sightings of so much wildlife, and the feel of a cool breeze all became part of my day and I found myself becoming part of nature's rhythm of the day.

It's wonderful to sit back and reflect on my summer's adventures. Even an hour walking around my neighborhood, observing the industrious birds can become an adventure.

As summer turns to autumn, I watch the goldfinches tear apart the dried-out thistles reminding me of a winter's

snowfall, and I get the thrill of watching my butterfly-bush become a rest stop for monarchs, swallowtails, and fritillaries. I feel a sadness to let go of my summer freedom and adventures. But on the other hand fall brings a special time too!

The cool nights, the amazing blue skies, an array of many colors, yellows, reds, oranges, is special in itself. And as my wildflowers lose their colors and become heavy with seeds for the wintering birds, I feel an anticipation. I look forward to all the field trips my group has planned for the new season. I look forward to all the interesting meetings that peak my curiosity. And I look forward to sharing this fall with my friends.



Mandatory Stream Buffers adopted despite DEP Chief's Objections

Juniata Valley Audubon strongly supported the Environmental Quality Board's proposed revisions to the Chapter 102 regulations, especially the section that **mandates 150 foot buffers for new development along Exceptional Value (EV) and High Quality (HQ) streams.** The Independent Regulatory Review Commission finally approved these revisions this past summer.

Requiring developers to maintain a buffer of trees and plants alongside our state's best streams is a smart, low-cost solution to protect these important natural resources and the communities and businesses that depend on them. Because buffers take advantage of Pennsylvania's existing natural resources, they deliver big benefits at little or no cost to taxpayers and businesses.

Buffers benefit our state by:

Keeping drinking water safe: By filtering pollutants out of runoff before it reaches our rivers and streams, buffers help reduce the cost of treating our drinking water. According to the EPA, every dollar invested in protecting the sources of our drinking water saves \$27 in drinking water treatment costs.

Reducing the risk of flood damage: Buffers keep new development away from the stream's edge, reducing damage when flooding happens. In addition, with fewer structures near the water's edge, runoff can be reduced and the volume of flood waters minimized.

Increasing property values: Studies have shown that stream buffers increase property values and the prices that buyers are willing to pay for properties. This in turn increases local the tax base and tax revenues for Pennsylvania's municipalities.

Protecting our streams: Buffers help filter nutrients out of runoff, protecting our streams from excess nitrogen and phosphorus. They shade streams, helping cool them and providing food for fish and other aquatic organisms. They reduce erosion and scouring, helping preserve stream banks and stream bottoms from damage.

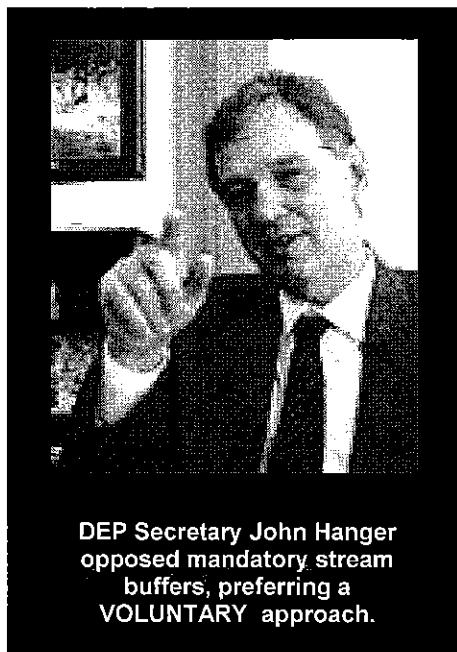
Saving Pennsylvania money: Buffers can help reduce the cost for municipalities of stormwater management by using existing natural resources more effectively. With tourism and recreation serving as major drivers of Pennsylvania's economy, and EV and HQ streams among the top destinations for anglers and eco-tourists, it is critical that we protect the resources these industries depend on. In 2008, Pennsylvania's tourism industry provided \$18 billion in wages to more than 600,000 residents. Fishing activities alone generate \$4.7 billion per year in revenue for the state—supplying 43,000 jobs.

Requiring buffers on streams is not a new concept. Over 192 municipalities in a dozen counties in Pennsylvania already have ordinances in place that require buffers on their streams and rivers. One third of these communities already require buffers of at least 100 feet for new developments, and some require as much as 300 foot buffers for EV and HQ streams.

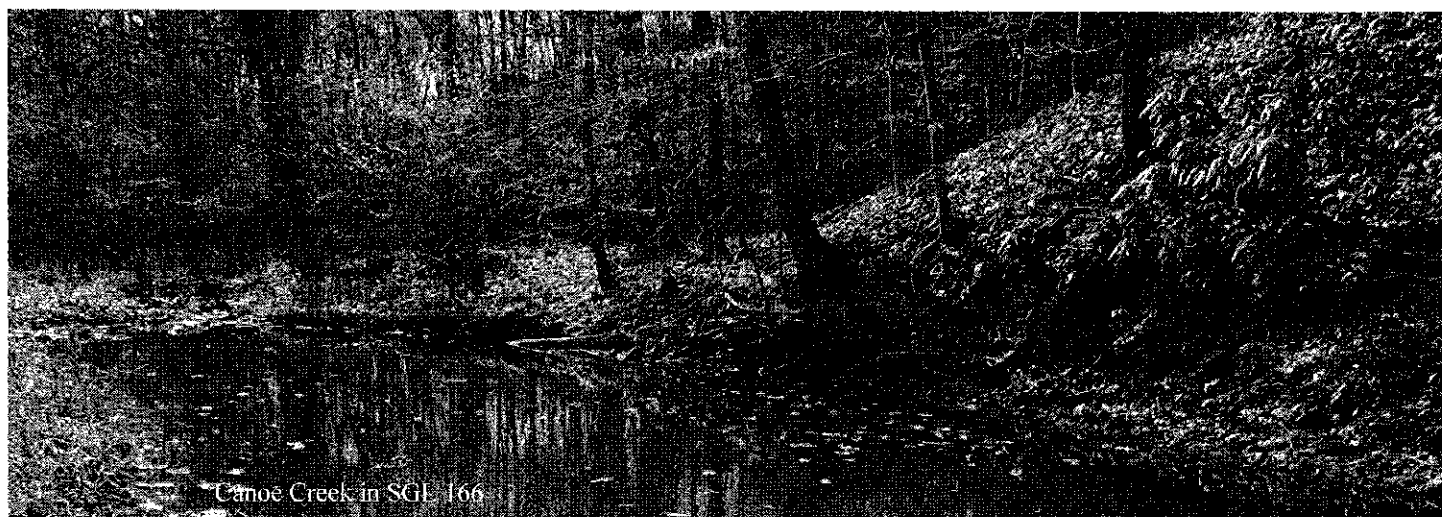
However, to be truly effective, buffers must be required on the full length of a stream.

Just one municipality in the middle of a watershed without a buffer rule can undermine the protection afforded to that township and its downstream neighbors from pollution and flood damage. The best way to protect our most sensitive streams is with a statewide requirement as was adopted earlier this year.

Protecting the clean streams that safeguard our health is a wise investment in the future of our commonwealth.



DEP Secretary John Hanger opposed mandatory stream buffers, preferring a VOLUNTARY approach.



Canoe Creek in SGL 166

Sandy Run Wetlands purchased

The Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission has approved the purchase of the Sandy Run Wetlands and an adjacent upland buffer consisting of approximately 50 acres located near Pinecroft in Blair County. After more than four years of efforts by the Little Juniata River Association, the Blair County Conservation District and John Kennedy Trout Unlimited, this important wetland and surrounding upland buffers will be owned by the PFBC. Funds for this purchase came from an account originally established and paid for by the developers of the Logan Town Centre for the destruction of wetlands on Brush Mountain.

Little Juniata River Association President Bill Anderson stated: *"The purchase and protection of this portion of Sandy Run, its surrounding wetlands and the major cold water springs on the property, has been a major objective for the Little Juniata River Association for more than 4 years. As LJRA President, I have conducted many tours of the area with DEP officials, various conservancy representatives, PFBC Commissioners and others over this time. I have also met with the property owner/seller on numerous occasions to work through various issues and obstacles to the purchase and I have attended several PFBC sessions to advocate for the Sandy Run Wetlands purchase. It's been a long haul down a long and twisted road. Many people have contributed to this successful outcome, but we especially owe our thanks to Jim Eckenrode, BCCD Watershed Specialist and*

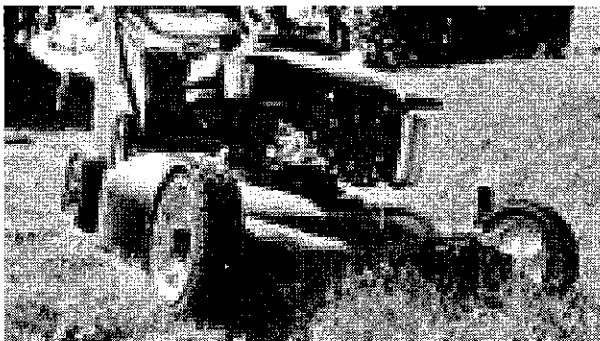
Jerry Green, John Kennedy TU President. Without their help this important area could not have been acquired. We also appreciate the support of Len Lichvar, the PFBC Commissioner representing this area."

Taken from the official PFBC Bulletin dated July 13th, 2010:

The PFBC has....

"Authorized the acquisition of property rights in Antis Township, Blair County. The property contains access to Sandy Run. The Commission has designated a portion of Sandy Run as a Class A wild trout stream, and the Department of Environmental Protection has designated it as a High Quality stream. Sandy Run provides a significant amount of the coldwater flow to the Little Juniata River, and wetlands located in or along the floodplain of Sandy Run are Exceptional Value and one of the most significant wetlands in Blair County. The Commission has entered into an option agreement in the amount of \$90,000 to purchase 49.45 acres and a 1.52 acre easement for public fishing, boating, fishery and riparian buffer management and access on a portion of the adjacent property designated the Kiln Tract. Funding will come from two sources – the John Kennedy Chapter of Trout Unlimited and the Blair County Conservation District".

Gas mowers are the smokestacks
of garden equipment.
According to the EPA,
**mowing your lawn with a
gas-powered mower for one hour
unleashes as many hydrocarbons
as driving a car almost 200 miles.**



County Natural Heritage Inventories highlight the Most Significant Biodiversity Hotspots

Since 1988, ecologists from the Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program (PNHP) have been conducting County Natural Heritage Inventories (CNHI) across the Commonwealth, progressing county by county. The focus of the CNHIs is to gather information on rare, threatened, and endangered plants, animals and unique natural communities, and then convey that information to various entities involved in conservation planning.

Biological Diversity Areas (BDAs) and Landscape Conservation Areas (LCAs) are delineated in each of the inventories. BDAs contain plants or animals of special concern, exemplary natural communities, or exceptional native diversity. LCAs are large areas of land that are important because of their size, habitats or presence of one or more BDAs. CNHIs are available for download from the Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program's website at: www.naturalheritage.state.pa.us/CNAI_Download.aspx. We invite you to explore the CNHI for your county, and discover the areas that define the natural character of your county and make "Penn's Woods" so unique.

Proposed Quarry threatens Frankstown Branch IBA, Heller Caves BDA, Lower Trail, Limestone Stream, Unique Springtail

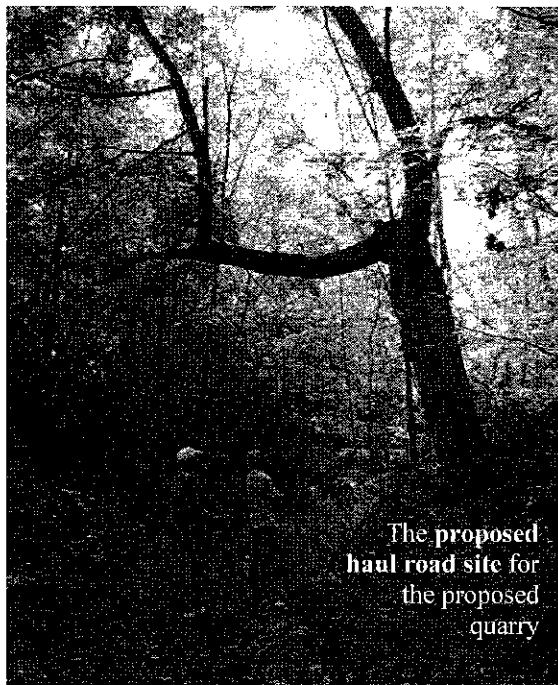
A proposed limestone quarry adjacent to the Lower Trail in the Covedale area of Catharine Township, Blair County would have a severe adverse impact on the Lower Trail and its users, local residents, the **Frankstown Branch of the Juniata River Important Bird Area (IBA)**, and the **Heller Caves Biological Diversity Area (BDA)**. The BDA and its defined supporting landscape and a portion of the IBA are part of the proposed mine. Catharine Properties, which owns approximately 200 acres fronting the trail, is proposing to develop a limestone quarry next to the trail, with its attendant blasting, bulldozing, heavy truck traffic, dust, noise, etc..

Enjoyed by more than 100,000 people annually, the 17-mile Lower Trail www.rttcpa.org is one of Blair County's major recreation assets. The trail was recently named a US National Recreation Trail. The Lower Trail is open to the public, free of charge, for hiking, jogging, bicycling, horseback riding, bird-watching, cross-country skiing, and other non-motorized recreation. The trail also provides access to the river for fishing, kayaking and canoeing.

In addition, the trail and its river valley and adjacent ridge have been designated as an Important Bird Area by the Ornithological Technical Committee of the Pennsylvania Biological Survey. See <http://pa.audubon.org/Sites/Site75.pdf>. This IBA is the site of Pennsylvania's highest concentration of cerulean warblers.



Bald eagle at the proposed quarry site by Tom Harvey



The proposed haul road site for the proposed quarry

The Heller Caves Biological Diversity Area is habitat for bat species of special concern in Pennsylvania. The Heller Caves serve as hibernacula for 100+ eastern small-footed bats (*Myotis leibii*), a Threatened species in Pennsylvania and a "priority species" in the Commonwealth's *Wildlife Action Plan*: <http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt?open=514&objID=621014&mode=2>

According to the *Blair County Natural Heritage Inventory* done under the direction of the Blair County Planning Commission from 2001-2006, the Heller Caves BDA hibernacula can be destroyed by adjacent blasting or other earth-moving activities that disrupt bedrock. In addition, the *Inventory* states that reduction of forest cover would reduce habitat area for roosting and feeding needed by these bats. According to the Pennsylvania Game Commission "*forested areas with caves, mines, rock outcrops or talus provide key summer habitat*" for small-footed bats.

damage the cave being used as a hibernation site" and "maintaining and cultivating forest cover will increase the amount of available habitat for bats."

The *Blair County Natural Heritage Inventory* goes on to state; "*Blasting and other activities that will affect the bed-rock should be avoided within this area so as not to*



Representatives of the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, the Little Juniata River Association and Juniata Valley Audubon inspect the stream along which the developer plans to construct a 40-foot wide haul road. The EADS Group map indicates that this will be the site of the stream crossing, where the stream will be confined to a pipe.

A new species of springtail was described in the the Heller Caves in 2006 - *Typhlogastrura helleri*, named after the Heller family.

<http://www.caves.org/pub/journal/PDF/V68/v68n2-Christiansen.pdf>.

The .pdf incorrectly describes the cave as being in Huntingdon County; it is located in the border region, but definitely Blair County. There is no Heller Cave in Huntingdon County. **This species occurs nowhere else. It is unique to the Heller Caves.**

Unbelievably, this destruction is to be financed by a USDA guaranteed \$5.4 million loan through American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. According to United States Department of Agriculture Press Release No. 0237.10:

"In Williamsburg, Pa., the Gulf Trading & Transport, LLC has been selected to receive a \$5.4 million guaranteed loan to Heller limestone quarry as well as funding the equipment and machinery needed for operations."

Amazingly, the **ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT CLASS II OF**

GULF TRADING & TRANSPORT LLC prepared by Michael

J. Alderfer of the USDA makes no mention of the small-footed bat

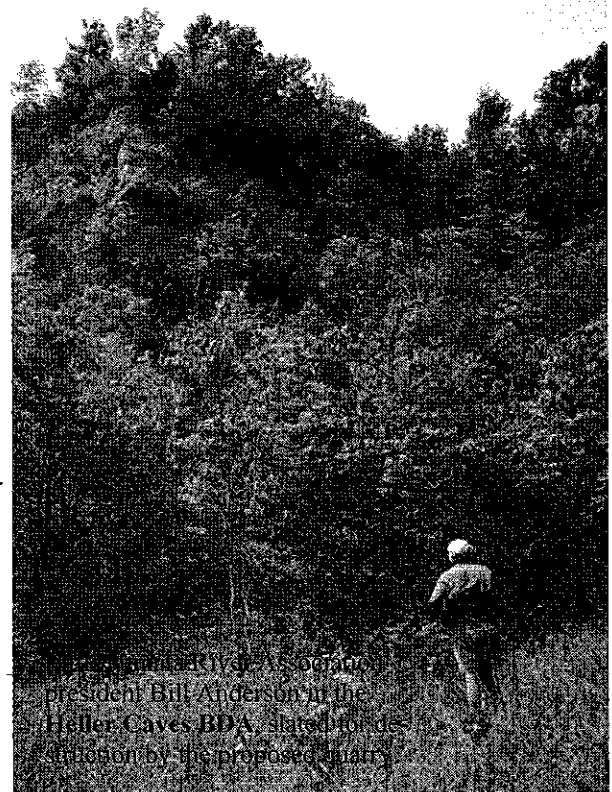
hibernaculum within the project area, makes no mention of the Heller Caves BDA, makes no mention of the springtail that is unique to the Heller Caves, makes no mention of the Lower Trail (except to say that it will not be impacted by the project!), and makes no mention of the fact that the project is within the Frankstown Branch of the Juniata River Important Bird Area.

The developer has received a Small Non Coal Mining Permit from the Pennsylvania DEP for the first part of this 135 acre project and intends to apply for a Large Non Coal Mining Permit this fall.

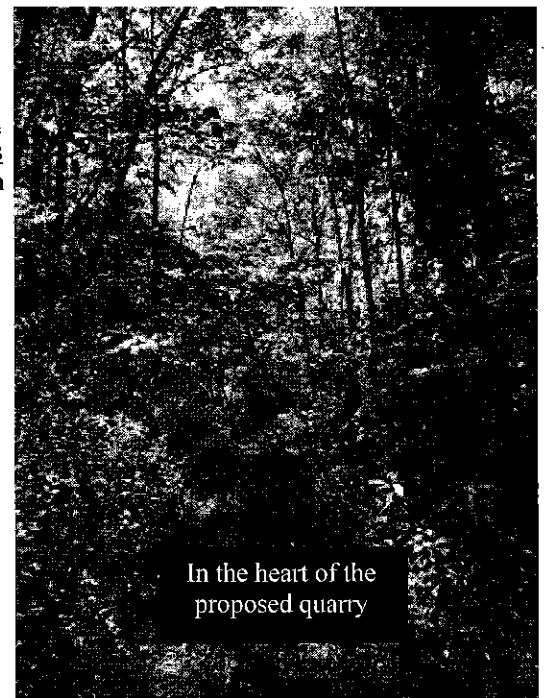
Because there is no public comment permitted regarding a Small Non Coal Mining Permit, Juniata Valley Audubon has been forced to sue the DEP because of that agency's gross negligence in issuing this permit.

Pennsylvania DEP's reviewers were negligent in their assessment of the unnamed tributary to the Frankstown Branch of the Juniata River along which a haul road is planned by the developer. This stream was mapped improperly by the DEP, which misrepresented the stream length on maps and misrepresented stream quality.

This was demonstrated to representatives of Juniata Valley Audubon and the Little Juniata River Association during a site visit which they requested with the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission. This visit on July 16 revealed strong flow in spite of drought conditions and a robust macroinvertebrate community including many mayflies.



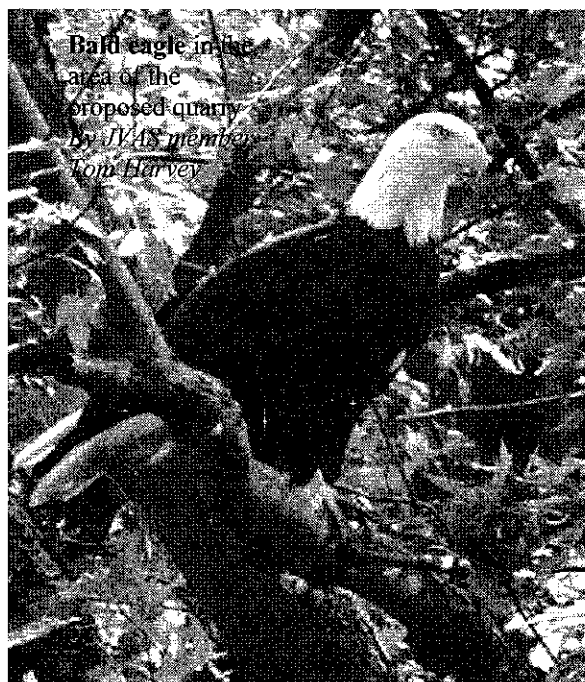
President Bill Anderson of the Heller Caves BDA, stands for designation by the proposed quarry.



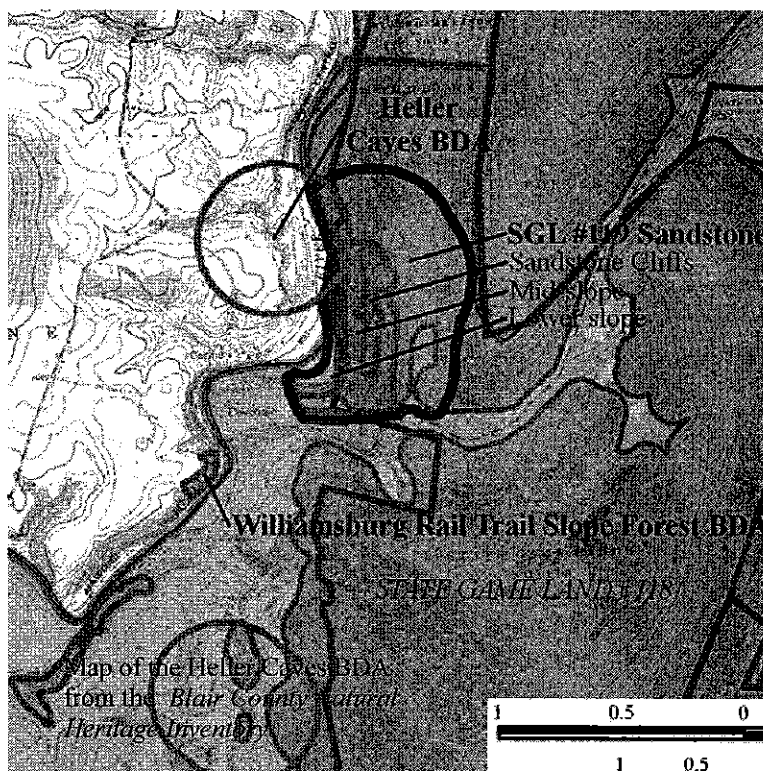
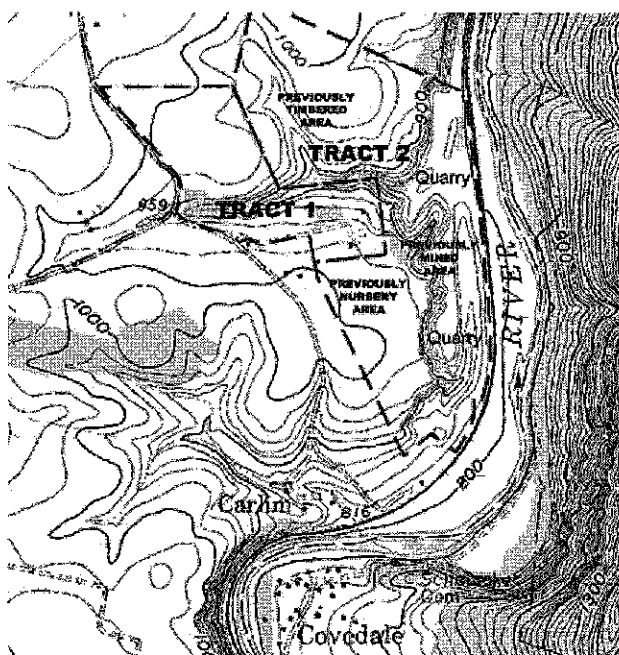
In the heart of the proposed quarry

The DEP report makes no mention of the small-footed bat hibernaculum within the project area, makes no mention of the Heller Caves BDA, makes no mention of the springtail that is unique to the Heller Caves, makes no mention of the Lower Trail, and makes no mention of the fact that the project is within the Frankstown Branch of the Juniata River Important Bird Area.

Juniata Valley Audubon, the Moshannon Group of the Sierra Club, the Pennsylvania Cave Conservancy, the Mid Atlantic Region of the National Speleological Society, the Little Juniata River Association, the John Kennedy Chapter of Trout Unlimited and a dozen other organizations and businesses are unconditionally opposed to any quarrying and blasting within 1/4 mile of the Heller Caves BDA and the Lower Trail. We question the validity of the USDA ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT mentioned above. We do not believe that federal money should finance a project that will harm a major recreational asset used by 100,000 people annually. We do not believe federal money should be used to finance a project that will destroy the hibernaculum and surrounding habitat used by the PA Threatened small-footed bat (which is being decimated by White Nose Syndrome). We do not believe that federal money should be used to finance a project that will destroy habitat of a species of springtail that is unique to the Heller Caves. We do not believe that federal money should be used to finance a project that will destroy habitat within an Important Bird Area that is home to the highest concentration of cerulean warblers in Pennsylvania. **We oppose any DEP permit that will allow the destruction of these irreplaceable treasures and we are prepared to take any necessary steps to protect our natural heritage.**



Bald eagle in the area of the proposed quarry
By JVAS member
Tom Harvey



If you are interested in helping us preserve the Lower Trail, the Frankstown Branch of the Juniata River Important Bird Area, and the Heller Caves Biological Diversity Area, then please contact JVAS Conservation Chair Dr. Stan Kotala at 814-946-8840 or ccwiba@keyconn.net.

Hiking Through Central Pennsylvania's Old-Growth Forests

by Dr. Stan Kotala

Upon hearing the term "old-growth" many people think of red-woods or other forests on America's west coast. However, we in central Pennsylvania are blessed with several stands of old growth within a short drive of State College. As a matter of fact, central Pennsylvania has the highest concentration and most acreage of old growth in the Commonwealth. This article will concentrate on two of these, Alan Seeger Natural Area and Detweiler Run Natural Area, both in northern Huntingdon County.

Nestled in a broad bowl along Standing Stone Creek is the 390-acre old-growth forest of the Alan Seeger Natural Area. Although in the heart of charcoal and furnace country, this tract of old growth trees was spared the axe because of a boundary dispute between two logging companies. (I wish that there had been more such disputes!) The deep soils along the stream provide a great substrate for this Natural Area's trees and shrubs, including ancient eastern hemlocks, white oaks, tuliprees, black gums and an extraordinarily thick understory of massive rhododendrons. The tallest trees in the Natural Area are white pines and tuliprees close to 140 feet high. The Alan Seeger Natural Area also has the finest stand of old growth black gum in the state and an equally impressive old growth mixed-oak forest on the mountain slope above is considered to be one of the best in Pennsylvania.

Starting your hike from the Natural Area parking lot, walk towards Stone Creek Road and pass the Alan Seeger Natural Area sign. Another sign with a map of the trail marks your entry point for this easy half-mile hike. Walk slowly and observe and admire the characteristics of an old growth forest: large standing trees, both living and dead; pit-mound formations caused by windthrows of trees; extensive moss on the tree trunks; a multilayered canopy; and downed boles.

Stay on the trail as it makes a loop to the east and then south, crossing over Standing Stone Creek. You'll see towering eastern hemlocks, some more than five centuries old. The fallen giants (some close to 1,000 years old) you'll see nestled among the 20-foot tall rhododendrons serve as nurse logs for many trees and shrubs. Going off the trail to get close to some of the giant trees nestled in the rhododendron tunnel area will require "rhodo surfing" for considerable distances.

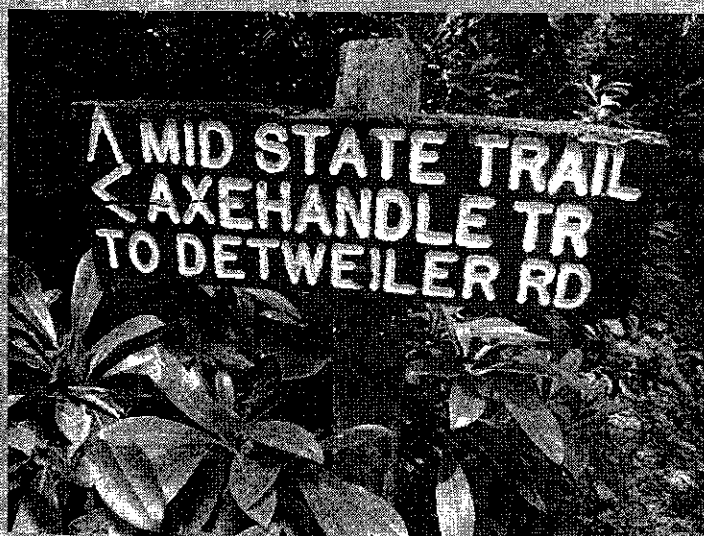
The trail crosses Standing Stone Creek on wooden bridges and emerges onto the road a short distance east of where you left your vehicle. You can stop at one of the Natural Area's pavilions for a snack or a picnic. For those who'd like to continue their old growth adventure in a more rigorous setting, drive back to Stone Creek Road and turn left, travel a quarter mile and turn right onto Bear Meadows Road. Travel on Bear Meadows Road for a mile till you come to the first sharp switchback and park near the gate, but do not block the gate. This is the Detweiler Run Natural Area.

As you pass the gate, descend the trail to your right, part of the 300-mile Mid State Trail, down toward Detweiler Run. This 463-acre area in Detweiler Hollow is recognized for the old-growth white pine and hemlock that grow there. The giant trees shade an understory of massive rhododendrons that cover both sides of Detweiler Run. Additional tree species in the area include red, scarlet and chestnut oaks and red maple. The ridge is composed of very steep, talus-strewn slopes and a small area of open talus fields. You'll hike upstream through this narrow valley with Thickhead Mountain to your left and Grass Mountain to your right. Look carefully into the stream and you're sure to see many small colorful brook trout.

You can hike upstream for a mile to the Axe Handle Trail and turn left, which takes you to Detweiler Road, where you'll make another left and follow the road back to your vehicle for a 2-mile hike, or you can continue upstream for another mile to a large natural gas pipeline and turn left, hiking steeply up this clearing to Detweiler Road and turn left onto Detweiler Road, heading back down to your vehicle for a 4-mile hike.

The old-growth forests at Alan Seeger Natural Area and Detweiler Run Natural Area are unique ecosystems that are a vital part of Pennsylvania's ecological health. Species such as the blackburnian warbler, the Canada warbler, the hooded warbler, the blue-headed vireo, the winter wren and the northern goshawk are more common here than in the surrounding managed forests. Both these State Forest Natural Areas and their birdlife are described in the new book *Birds of Central Pennsylvania* from Stone Mountain Publishing. This book gives detailed historical and ecological descriptions of some of the best areas for birding in the Centre region. It should be a part of every central Pennsylvania nature enthusiast's library. Knowledge of the natural history of your hiking grounds and familiarity with its flora and fauna will add immensely to your enjoyment.

Saturday, October 2 — Rothrock State Forest Old Growth Tour: Visit Alan Seeger Natural Area (1-mile easy walk on level ground) in the morning, followed by a picnic lunch at a pavilion in the Natural Area. Then, if you wish, visit Detweiler Run Natural Area (3-mile difficult hike on rocky, slippery ground) in the afternoon. Meet at the Alan Seeger Natural Area parking lot on Stone Valley Road at 11 a.m. Contact Stan Kotala at cwiba@keyconn.net or 814-946-8840 for more details.



This past spring, Blair Chamber of Commerce president Joe Hurd wrote an article for the Altoona Mirror in which he described "*a defining moment*" when he realized that "*It's the resource preservation thing that doesn't sit well with me.*" He went on to describe his opposition to "*preserving the habitats in which wildlife resides.*" The Altoona Mirror published JVAS' response to Chamber president Hurd's article:

To the editor;

In a recent column of "Chamber Notes" in the Blair Business Mirror, Blair County Chamber of Commerce president Joe Hurd expressed his dissatisfaction with The Nature Conservancy for purchasing close to 700 acres on Brush Mountain to preserve this land for wildlife and outdoor recreation.

"It's the resource preservation thing that doesn't sit well with me" wrote Mr. Hurd. He complained that The Nature Conservancy is taking "*matters of conservation to the extreme*" by purchasing this land from a willing seller and then leaving the land in its natural state instead of developing it.

The Nature Conservancy's Brush Mountain Preserve is located upslope of the Logan Town Centre and behind Sylvan East. It is not posted and is open to hunters, hikers, and other nature enthusiasts.

Chamber of Commerce president Joe Hurd wrote "*I've never been mistaken for an outdoors guy*" and "*I'm not likely to get all emotional about the splendor of the great outdoors.*"

For the benefit of those who are outdoors people and who do enjoy the splendor of the great outdoors, **Juniata Valley Audubon will be hosting a tour of The Nature Conservancy's Brush Mountain Preserve on Sunday, September 26.** There will be an overview of the importance of the site as a Blair County Natural Heritage Area, an Important Mammal Area, and an Important Bird Area. **Meet at the Canoe Creek State Park Environmental Education Center at 2 p.m.** We will carpool to the Brush Mountain Preserve. Hope to see you there!

Stan Kotala, M.D.

Conservation Chair

Juniata Valley Audubon



JVAS members at The Nature Conservancy's Brush Mountain Preserve

Rattlesnakes Sound Warning on Biodiversity and Habitat Fragmentation

Like the canary in the coal mine, the timber rattlesnake may be telling us something about the environment we share.

Cornell University researchers -- using cutting-edge tools including fine-scale molecular genetics and microsatellite markers -- tracked the rattlesnakes to understand how wildlife habitats are affected by even modest human encroachment.

"We used this species as a model to investigate general processes underlying population-level responses to habitat fragmentation," said the authors, led by Cornell post-doctoral researcher Rulon Clark, in the paper "Roads, Interrupted Dispersal and Genetic Diversity in Timber Rattlesnakes," currently available online and to be published in the journal *Conservation Biology*.

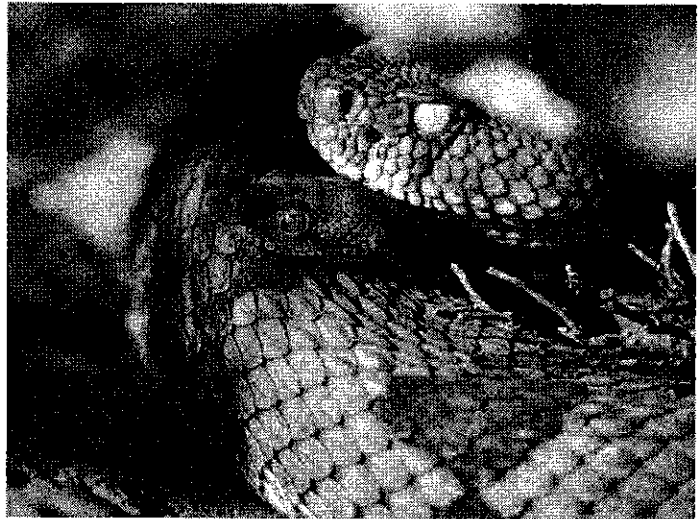
Researchers discovered that fragmentation of natural habitats by roads -- even smaller, low-traffic highways -- has had a significant effect over the past 80 years on genetic structure of timber rattlesnakes in four separate regions of upstate New York. Less genetic diversity means populations become more susceptible to illness or environmental changes that threaten their survival.

"Our study adds to a growing body of literature indicating that even anthropogenic habitat modifications that does not destroy a large amount of habitat can create significant barriers to gene flow," said researchers.

While the rattlesnakes shorter lifespan and method of travel may help make the impact of roadways relatively quick and dramatic, the new findings reinforce earlier work on other terrestrial animals -- from grizzly bears to frogs -- and provides a fresh warning about habitat fragmentation that all plans for future human development must consider.

Researchers used fine-scale molecular genetics as well as behavioral and ecological data to look at timber rattlesnakes from 19 different hibernacula -- shared wintering quarters -- in four regions in New York: the Adirondacks, Sterling Forest, Bear Mountain and Chemung County. In each case they used microsatellite markers to track how populations dispersed from

their winter dens, their subsequent reproductive patterns, and how roads in these areas altered that gene flow. The roads themselves -- all paved roadways built in the late 1920s to early 1930s for motorized traffic -- were examined for use and relationship to natural barriers. Tissue samples were examined from more than 500 individual snakes.



Mother timber rattlesnake with young on Stone Mountain, Huntingdon County
by IVAS member Nick Bolgiano

"Over all four regions and 19 hibernacula, none of the genetic clusters ... spanned either major or minor roads; hibernacula belonging to the same genetic deme were always on the same side of the road," the paper states. **"This fine-scaled analysis, repeated over four geographic regions, underscores the significance of roads as barrier to dispersal and natural population processes for timber rattlesnakes and perhaps other species."**



Former *Gnatcatcher* editor Helena Kotala will be spending the next year at the University of Kiel in the German province of Schleswig-Holstein, just south of Denmark on the Baltic Sea. Helena will be studying geography and will be working on the European Greenbelt initiative, a continent-wide effort to transform the former Iron Curtain zone into an ecological reserve, with core areas and corridors stretching from the Baltic Sea in Scandinavia to the Black Sea.

*Thanks for all you've done for our chapter,
Helena, and good luck
in your studies and your work!*

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER JVAS FIELD TRIPS

Saturday, September 11 — Fall Foliage Float on the Frankstown: Join us for a 3-hour canoe/kayak trip along the Frankstown Branch of the Juniata River from Flowing Spring to Williamsburg. Bring your canoes and kayaks. We will shuttle vehicles to the endpoint prior to starting the trip. Don't forget your life vests, water, and snacks. Meet at noon at the Flowing Spring trailhead. Stan Kotala ccwiba@keyconn.net or 946-8840

Saturday, September 18—Moore's Hill Trail at Canoe Creek State Park: Join Deb Tencer and enjoy a morning hike to appreciate the beauty of the end of our summer and all the changes it brings. This hike is approximately 4 miles and a moderate to somewhat challenging level. Meet at the education center at 10 am and join us with your **picnic lunch** afterwards.
Deb Tencer 932-9183 naturehikergal@gmail.com

Saturday, September 25- Black Gum Foliage Hike in Plummer's Hollow: Moderately strenuous hike up plummers hollow. 3 mile hike up plummers hollow road and than back along black gum trail . Created for maximum views of the spectacular under story foliage of black gum, which reaches its height a couple weeks before the canopy height trees. Meet at 10am at the parking area along Rt 453 about 200 feet east of the intersection with Rt 550. **Pack a lunch.** Dave Bonta 686-7274

Sunday, September 26— A Hike at The Nature Conservancy's Brush Mountain Preserve: 2-mile hike with overview of the importance of the site as a Blair County Natural Heritage Area, an Important Mammal Area, and an Important Bird Area. Meet at the Canoe Creek State Park Environmental Education Center at 2 p.m. Stan Kotala 946-8840 ccwiba@keyconn.net

Sunday, October 17—Crist Ridge Trail at Blue Knob State Park: 2 ½ hour hike down Crist Ridge and back up again on Rock 'n Ridge Trail. The fall colors should be at their peak due to the high elevations of this state park. This hike is a bit strenuous upon the return portion but quite worth the amazing views. Meet at Chappel Field parking area at 10 am and **pack a lunch.** Deb Tencer 932-9183 naturehikergal@gmail.com

Sunday, October 31 — Bell's Gap Rail Trail Shuttle Hike: Five-mile downhill hike along an old railroad grade down the Allegheny Front west of Bellwood. Meet at noon at the Bell's Gap Trail Roots trailhead. Hikers will be shuttled to the trailhead at the top of the Allegheny Front. Stan Kotala ccwiba@keyconn.net 946-8840

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What is the JVAS?

Juniata Valley Audubon, chartered in 1969, is a chapter of National Audubon covering the Southern Alleghenies region. With almost 500 members, the JVAS is one of 24 Audubon chapters in Pennsylvania.

To join, fill out and cut out the coupon below and mail it to:

Juniata Valley Audubon
c/o Dr. Alice Kotala, Membership Chair
P.O. Box 148
Hollidaysburg, PA 16648

Join Juniata Valley Audubon

Juniata Valley Audubon membership provides you with the following benefits:

- Notification of Juniata Valley Audubon's exciting activities including monthly nature programs, field trips, and other events.
- Subscription to the bimonthly chapter newsletter, *The Gnatcatcher*.
- Opportunity to participate in local advocacy efforts to help make a real difference.
- Opportunity to aid in the preservation of the natural world.
- Opportunity to have fun in joining with fellow nature enthusiasts.

Become a chapter-only member:

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 ____ **Supporting- \$35**
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 ccwiba@keycomm.net

Field Trips.....Deb Tencer 932-9183
 naturehikergal@yahoo.com

Publications and Publicity.....Dr. Stan Kotala (see above)

Charlie Hoyer (website)
 charma77@verizon.net

Education.....Jody Wallace 684-2425
 ouranimalhouse@verizon.net

Hospitality.....Marcia Bonta 684-3113
 marcibonta@hotmail.com

Historian.....Charlie Hoyer 684-7376
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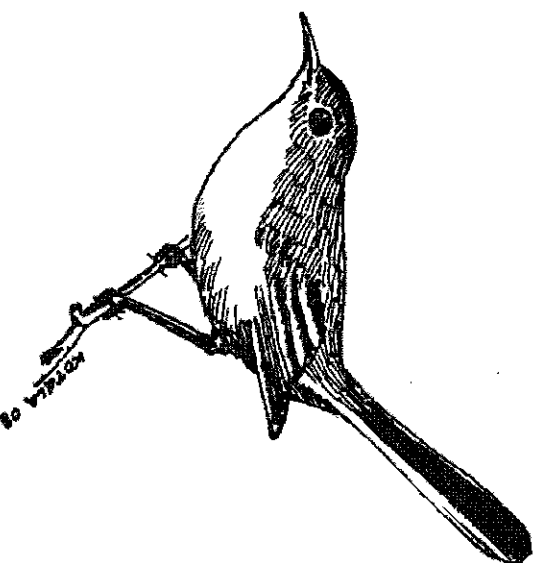
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 stevebonta@yahoo.com

Director at Large.....Elisabeth Kotala 949-3663
 ccwiba@keycomm.net

Director at Large.....Mike Jackson 653-9268
 mljackson2@embargmail.com

JUNIATA VALLEY AUDUBON 2010-2011

Programs and Field Trips



Audubon programs generally are presented on the third Tuesday of the months September through May except for December.

Unless otherwise specified, program meetings begin at 7 p.m. in the meeting room of the Bellwood-Antis Public Library,
 526 Main St., Bellwood.

Travel directions: Take the Bellwood Exit (41) off I-99, go straight through the traffic light at the Sheetz intersection, proceed about four blocks, and turn right just before the railroad overpass. Turn left, go two blocks; the library is on the right.

Our programs, designed for a general audience, are free and open to the public.

JVAS PROGRAMS

Sept 21 "Raptor Migration in Central PA"- Nick Bolgiano and Greg Grove—Two local, experienced birders and authors, Nick Bolgiano and Greg Grove, will present photos and information from their recently published "Birds of Central PA" book. *Autographed copies of their book will be available for sale.*

Oct. 19 "White Nose Syndrome" - Greg Turner, an endangered mammals biologist for the PA Game Commission, will share with us the latest research on the mysterious fungal disease that is killing millions of bats.

Nov. 16 "Floating Islands"—Colin Lennox, founder and CEO of Ecolands LLC, will present a program on BioHaven@ Floating Islands. Mike and Laura Jackson (JVAS members) will show what they did with the Biohaven floating island that they bought at the silent auction last spring. They will also show how they set up more ponds and a bog garden to diversify their backyard habitat.

Dec. 18 Christmas Bird Count

Jan. 18 **Member's Night:** All JVAS members are encouraged to bring any nature-related items that they wish to share: music, photographs, video, poetry, artwork, etc. Please contact Laura Jackson mlackson2@embarqmail to let her know if you plan to contribute to the program.

Feb. 15 "Photographing Wildlife" - Rob Criswell is the Director of the Game Commission's Southcentral Region, in addition to being a skilled photographer, part-time writer, and researcher. His program will include a variety of photos highlighting the diversity of wildlife in Pennsylvania, with tips on how to take better nature photos.

March 15 **Local Waterways and Watersheds**—Jim Eckenrode, the watershed specialist for the Blair County Conservation District, will share his expertise on the importance of water and how a healthy watershed results in a great biodiversity of wildlife.

April 19 "History in the Woods" - tentative

May 17 "Love Lives of Frogs, Salamanders, and Secretive Caecilians" - Dr. Jacqueline Grant, a Senior Lecturer in Wildlife and Fisheries Science at Penn State, will share her research on the love life of amphibians. Dr. Grant will discuss frog songs that may be heard in PA in May, but will also highlight some unusual behaviors of frogs from around the world. She'll also discuss breeding behavior in salamanders and caecilians, and how they overcome their voiceless condition.

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Sunday, November 21 - Mid State Trail: Hike the Mid State Trail segment starting at Jo Hays Vista along the ridge to Pennsylvania Furnace Road. We will shuttle vehicles. This hike should take 3-4 hours and we can take breaks along the incredible vistas. Meet at Jo Hays Vista at 10 am Deb Tencer 932-9183 naturehikergal@gmail.com

Sunday, February 20- Saw Mill Trail at Blue Knob State Park: This 3 1/2 mile hike will be a great way to beat cabin fever. Meet at Chappels Field parking area at 11 am. Deb Tencer 932-9183 naturehikergal@gmail.com

Saturday, March 19—Hiking above the Horseshoe Curve: Come enjoy the early signs of spring as we hike up the Allegheny Front and view an area where an abandoned mining town once stood. Meet at the Horseshoe Curve at 10 am. Deb Tencer naturehikergal@gmail.com

Sunday April 10—Early Wildflower Drive. Dave and Marcia Bonta will lead a driving tour of some prime wildflower spots in our area to look for hepatica, bloodroot, trout lily and Jeffersonia. Due to the impact of deer browsing on more pristine sites many of the best viewing areas for wildflowers are on the steep slopes along roads and highways. Meet at 10 am at Advance Auto Parts on Rt 22 in Huntingdon and **pack a lunch.** Contact the Bontas at 686-7274.

Sunday, May 15 — Annual Terry Wentz Memorial Hike: Honoring the former Canoe Creek State Park manager who served on the Juniata Valley Audubon board for more than a decade. Four-mile moderate hike on the Moore's Hill Trail to observe birds and wildflowers. Meet at the Canoe Creek State Park Environmental Education Center at 2pm. Stan Kotala 946-8840 ccwiba@keyconn.net

SEE OUR WEBSITE www.jvas.org OR SUBSCRIBE TO JVAS eNews VIA THE WEBSITE OR VISIT THE JVAS FACEBOOK PAGE FOR ADDITIONAL FIELD TRIPS