



Juniata Watershed Journal

JUNIATA CLEAN WATER PARTNERSHIP

Volume 11, Issue 4

Summer 2010

Tenth Annual Juniata River Sojourn Held in June

Text and photos by Johanna Mutti

There is something undeniably cheerful about a flotilla of colorful canoes and kayaks floating down the Juniata River. This was exactly the scene that greeted communities from Huntingdon to Newport as the 2010 Juniata River Sojourn paddled down the main stem of the Juniata River June 13-19th. This was the tenth year JCWP has hosted a Sojourn, and one of the highest attended with a total of 117 people participating for part or all of the week long journey down the Main Line Canal Greenway.



We started the week at Branch Camp, near Huntingdon. Friends reunited and newcomers were greeted as the group joined forces around the hand crank ice cream maker to churn and crank the custard into frozen vanilla ice cream under the direction of Ginny Mutti. It was a hot and humid night, perfect for a cold treat!

In the morning, the group reconvened to Corbin's Island where 87 people in over 75 boats took to the water under the careful direction of the safety boaters from Rothrock Outfitters. Sunday evening featured a program on trails and the greenway with Carl Lorraine from the Standing Stone Trail Association and Karl King of the Allegheny Ridge Corporation. We camped for the night in the Mapleton Memorial Riverside Park.

On Monday morning we launched from Mapleton. Our lunch stop included a service project of cleaning the illegal dump at the river access site in Mount Union. Celina Seftas, Huntingdon County Conservation District and PA CleanWays Coordinator, met us on site to lead the clean up. Thanks to Parks Garbage Service, Inc for donating the dumpster! Despite the poison ivy, we managed to collect 700 lbs of trash plus 4 tires.

The afternoon drizzle cleared off in time for everyone to set up their tents and enjoy the evening at Beacon Lodge around the campfire. Jim Hamilton provided entertainment after dinner with music, wooden toys, and storytelling. As the evening headed on to dusk, a spontaneous talent show took place. Among the talents demonstrated included song, poetry, tunes on the harmonica and recorder, karate, milking, and more. Mike Makufka awarded the prizes based on applause from the audience. Top prizes went to Tess Geishauser for her Irish dancing, and Cindy Baney for her story. Prizes were donated by Appalachian Outdoors in State College and Bass Pro Shop in Harrisburg.



Continued on page 2

Tuesday brought an all day paddle from Newton Hamilton to McVeytown. That evening at Idle Acres offered hot showers for the first night of the trip, which helped to make up for some repulsive portable toilets the campground had provided. (To quote the owner of the campground, “They are supposed to smell like that.” Don’t worry folks that will not happen again!) In the evening, Martin Melville spoke to the group about forestry and the state of Pennsylvania’s forests.



Several people reported seeing bald eagles (up to 6!) on the river Wednesday between McVeytown and Lewistown. WaterSide Campground again offered showers and a pool, which were enjoyed by many. Stephen Runkle from the Susquehanna River Basin Commission provided an evening presentation with an historical perspective to the Main Line Canal and what it would have been like to ride the canal between Philadelphia and Hollidaysburg.

For the first four days on the water, our numbers held in the mid to high eighties. Each day we had a few new faces and some turn over, but the group held its numbers. Wednesday evening and Thursday morning the group dwindled with quite a few people having to head for home and back to work. When the boats hit the water Thursday morning the numbers were down in the mid sixties for the paddle to Mifflin.

Stops along the way for the day included the second largest sycamore tree in the state, a quick side trip up Jack’s Creek to see the stone arch bridge, and a stop in Lewistown for lunch at Victory Park. Kevin Morgan from Community Partnerships RC&D had a booth with information about invasive plants for people to look at. Jim Tunall from the Chamber of Commerce spoke briefly about the park and the mural being painted on the bridge abutment. The group arrived in Mifflin where the generous crew from the Central Juniata Park and Mifflin Pool were busy making dinner for us. After dinner, people enjoyed the pool, watched the softball game, and gathered around the pit fire.

Friday was the longest paddle day of the week between Mifflin and Millerstown. Some technical difficulties in the morning delayed the launch, but with some slight tweaks to the schedule, lunch and a couple of afternoon breaks broke up the day. That evening at Pittman Campground, Stephanie Eisenbise from the Chesapeake Bay Foundation presented a program about the current concerns and health of the Bay during dinner.



Continued on page 3

By Saturday morning, the group was down to 43 paddling. The group paddled to Howe Township Park where lunch was waiting for them. After farewell hugs and goodbyes, everyone loaded their canoes and kayaks back onto their vehicles and drove away, until next year.

On a personal note- this was my first sojourn as an organizer or as a participant. I really appreciate all the help I got in planning and pulling off the event. It was especially a treat for me to be able to join the group on the river on Thursday. Experiencing the sojourn from the water was fun and relaxing and it was great to get to know some of you better! Thank you all for coming and participating.

When coordinating for a group of this size, it is nearly impossible to please everyone all the time, especially when it comes to food. I appreciate all the comments and suggestions you have shared and submitted in the evaluation. All comments will be considered in future planning efforts.

Johanna Mutti is the outgoing 2009/2010 JCWP Education and Outreach Coordinator and PMSC AmeriCorps Member .

Fun 2010 Sojourn Facts	
◆	Seven days and 86.5 river miles
◆	◆ Total of 117 people
◆	Total of 494 “on water days”
◆	Total of 38 through paddlers
◆	An average of 71 people paddling each day (range from 43-87)
◆	◆ Age spread of 82 years
◆	Just shy of 1,500 meals served

Without the support and services of the following people and business, this sojourn would not have been possible. Thank you!

Programs

Ginny Mutti, Carl Lorence, Karl King, Celina Seftas, Jim Hamilton, Martin Melville, Stephen Runkle, Kevin Morgan, Jim Tunall, Stephanie Eisenbise.

Caterers & Restaurants

Wildflower Café, Boxer’s Café, Tops Diner, Brenneman’s Meat Market, Harshbarger’s Malt ‘N Sub, the Downtown OIP and Grill, Don and Ed from CJP, Spruce Hill Lunch, Espresso Yourself Café.

Campgrounds & Property Owners

Branch Camp, US Army Corps of Engineers, PA Fish and Boat Commission, Mapleton Borough, PA Lions Club Beacon Lodge, Ruth Dunmire, Idle Acres Campground, WaterSide Campground, Lewistown Borough, Central Juniata Park, Pittman Campground, and Howe Township.

Grant Funding

Pennsylvania Organization of Watersheds and Rivers & the Foundation for PA Watersheds.

Additional thanks

Tulpehocken Spring Water donated 20 5-gallon jugs of water that kept everyone hydrated
Parks Design and Ink printed the t-shirts
Ken Wertz and Jim Parson provided the potable toilets
Harrisburg Bass Pro Shop and Appalachian Outdoors donated talent show prizes
Rothrock Outfitters provided exceptional service on and off the water
And of course, our families and friends.

MIKE'S MEANDERING

Introducing the Juniata Cooperative Weed Management Area

By Mike Makufka

Invasive plants have been written about several times in earlier additions of the *Juniata Journal*. However I want to write about a new initiative in the Juniata Watershed that will help drive a more coordinated effort to identify and eradicate early detection species before they establish a foothold in the watershed. This initiative is the Juniata Cooperative Weed Management Area (JCWMA). The JCWMA promotes an EDRR (early detection/rapid response) strategy to address invasive plants before they begin to colonize is the most cost effective means of prevention and control.

Many of you are probably not familiar with what a cooperative weed management area is and what one does. A cooperative weed management area (CWMA) refers to a local organization that integrates invasive plant management resources across jurisdictional boundaries to benefit the entire community. In other words it is a local weed management organization that is led by a steering committee and is formally organized under an agreement or memorandum of understanding. This organization works on coordinating control management strategies on sites that assessments show are being infiltrated by invasive species. Species on the federal and state noxious weed list are also prioritized.

The JCWMA is one of only a few such CWMA's in the eastern United States. Meeting periodically over the last two year, the JCWMA steering committee was to helped to enlist potential partners in an advisory capacity to develop a strategic management plan to address invasive plant management. This document, the **Juniata Cooperative Weed Management Area Strategic Plan**, has just been completed. The document was prepared by Natural Biodiversity and Juniata Clean Water Partnership and was funded by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's *Pulling Together Initiative*. The plan is available to download from the JCWP (www.jcwp.org) and Natural Biodiversity (www.naturalbiodiversity.org) web sites. We eventually hope to have a separate web site just for this initiative.

The steering committee also worked to identify and involve partners within the watershed. Official JCWMA partners at the time of publication include: Bedford County Conservation District; Blair County Conservation District; Juniata Clean Water Partnership; Natural Biodiversity; PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Bureau of Forestry; and Southern Alleghenies RC&D Council. We hope to bring on more partners in the near future as the JCWMA grows.

The Juniata Cooperative Weed Management Area Strategic Plan outlines an invasive plant management methodology that includes early detection, training volunteers, developing a target plant list for the watershed, and an eradication strategy. What makes a CWMA different than individual agency work is that a CWMA has a plan that is watershed-wide and isn't hindered by jurisdictional boundaries. Control measures do not have to stop at an agency's boundaries and can cross those lines as long as the agencies or landowners have signed on as partners. Control doesn't have to end at a certain point which leaves the boundaries of the control area susceptible to colonization.

Another advantage of the JCWMA is that a concerted effort among partners throughout the watershed will

Continued on page 5

have the effect of prioritizing the management of existing invasive plant sites. It will also allow the network of partners to collaboratively work on problems as a watershed wide environmental issue.

The JCWMA strategic plan is designed to work within the framework of individual agency invasive plant management goals, not to supersede or replace them. For instance, both the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and the Game Commission have plans for invasive plant control. The JCWMA will incorporate those plans into a management strategy that benefits the agency and also the watershed.

The ongoing training of volunteers and conducting outreach is an important element to success that is addressed in the plan. In order to spread the network of partners beyond conservation organizations and government agencies, education and involvement is very important. By educating and training volunteers in proper field collection and verification of data, our knowledge of existing infested areas will expand. This will also speed up the identification of emerging species in the watershed, an essential tool for early detection/rapid response strategies.

The writing of the **Juniata Cooperative Weed Management Area Strategic Plan** is only the beginning. Having a plan gives the watershed an edge when it comes to funding opportunities. Involving stakeholders throughout the watershed is the next step in giving the JCWMA credibility. I ask you to become involved. Check out the above mentioned web sites to download a copy of the plan. Call Natural Biodiversity (814-509-6036) or Juniata Clean Water Partnership (814-506-1190) to find out more about how to be involved.

Fish and Boat Commission Seeks Private Landowners

Bellefonte, PA – The Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC) seeks private landowners for public fishing access easements in Blair and Huntingdon counties. Acquisition of public access easements is part of the agency's strategy to improve public fishing areas and ensure that the public has access to these opportunities in perpetuity.

A public fishing easement is a voluntary and permanent legal contract between the landowner and the Fish and Boat Commission. The easement provides a 35 foot corridor along a stream bank that allows the public to wade in or walk along the stream bank for the purpose of fishing. The landowner receives payment and in return, the landowner agrees to allow access for public fishing and Commission activities along a stream corridor. The landowner continues to own and control the land.

Landowners must own stream frontage within the project area of the Little Juniata River, Juniata River and the Frankstown Branch of the Juniata River in Blair and Huntingdon counties. The program is provided by the PFBC, Little Juniata River Association and Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. Landowners interested in entering into a public fishing easement with the Fish and Boat Commission should call Jackie Kramer at 717-705-7845 for more information.

The mission of the Fish and Boat Commission is to protect, conserve, and enhance the Commonwealth's aquatic resources and provide fishing and boating opportunities. For more information about fishing and boating in Pennsylvania, please visit our website at www.fishandboat.com.

The Little Juniata River Association has been at the forefront of this effort and has received a grant totaling \$200,000 for the purpose of public fishing easements in both water sheds. Bill Anderson, LJRA President, is happy to meet or talk with anyone who has questions. bjuniata@verizon.net or call at 814 684 5922.

Lower Trail Threatened by Proposed Quarry

by Stan Kotala

A proposed limestone quarry adjacent to the Lower Trail in the Covedale area of Catharine Township, Blair County will 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 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 18-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. This IBA is the site of Pennsylvania's highest concentration of cerulean warblers.

The Heller Caves Biological Diversity Area is habitat for bat species of special concern in Pennsylvania. 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*.

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.

The *Blair County Natural Heritage Inventory* goes on to state; "Blasting and other activities that will affect the bedrock should be avoided within this area so as not to damage the cave being used as a hibernation site" and "maintaining and cultivating forest cover will increase the amount of available habitat for bats."

A new species of springtail was described in the Heller Caves in 2006 - *Typhlogastrura helleri*. The paper incorrectly describes the cave as being in Huntingdon County; it is located in the border region, but definitely Blair County not Huntingdon County. This species has not been found anywhere else. It is unique to the Heller Caves.

The proposed quarry is being financed by a guaranteed \$5.4 million USDA loan through American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. According to USDA Press Release No. 0237.10: "In Pennsylvania, the Recovery Act has guaranteed \$35.6 million in business loans that are expected to save or create hundreds of jobs and this is great news for rural communities across this state," Vilsack said. "Supporting local economies in places like Turbotville and Richland, and now Williamsburg, is one of the many ways the Obama Administration and USDA are working to rebuild and revitalize rural America. 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."

Continued on page 7

The Environmental Assessment Class II of Gulf Trading & Transport LLC prepared for this quarry project on Catherine Properties by Michael J. Alderfer of the USDA makes no mention of the small-footed bat hibernaculum within the project area, the Heller Caves BDA, the springtail that is unique to the Heller Caves, the Lower Trail, or the fact that the project is within the Frankstown Branch of the Juniata River Important Bird Area.

In addition, the 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. A site visit on July 16 revealed strong flow in spite of drought conditions and a robust macroinvertebrate community including many mayflies.

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, and the John Kennedy Chapter of Trout Unlimited 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.

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 Juniata Valley Audubon Conservation Chair Dr. Stan Kotala at 814-946-8840 or ccwiba@keyconn.net.

Links to Reports and Documents Cited in this article:

Commonwealth Wildlife Action Plan

<http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt?open=514&objID=621014&mode=2>

United States Department of Agriculture Press Release No. 0237.10

<http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome?contentidonly=true&contentid=2010/05/0237.xml>

Frankstown Branch of the Juniata River Important Bird Area

<http://pa.audubon.org/Sites/Site75.pdf>

Blair County Natural Heritage Inventory

http://www.naturalheritage.state.pa.us/CNAI_PDFs/Blair%20County%20NAI%202006.pdf

Article on new species of Springtails in Heller Cave

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



Juniata Valley Audubon Society

Upcoming 2010 Summer and Fall fieldtrips and programs. For more information about these and other Juniata Valley Audubon Society events, visit ww.jvas.org

Sunday, August 22 — Bats of Brush Mountain: Join local naturalist Dr. Stan Kotala for a hike at The Nature Conservancy's new Brush Mountain Preserve to observe bats on Brush Mountain. This site is part of the Canoe Creek Important Mammal Area. Meet at the Canoe Creek State Park Environmental Education Center at 7 p.m. We will carpool to the Brush Mountain Preserve. Contact Stan Kotala ccwiba@keyconn.net or at 814-946-8840 for more details.

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. Contact Stan Kotala by ccwiba@keyconn.net or at 814-946-8840 for more details.

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 ccwiba@keyconn.net or at 814-946-8840 for more details.

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. Contact Stan Kotala ccwiba@keyconn.net or at 814-946-8840 for more details.

Saturday, November 27 — Post-Thanksgiving Hike: Join Stan Kotala in a 6-mile hike from Williamsburg to Flowing Spring. This will be a shuttle hike, with most vehicles at the endpoint (Flowing Spring). Meet at the Flowing Spring trailhead at noon. Hikers will be shuttled from there to Williamsburg and then hike to Flowing Spring. Contact Stan Kotala ccwiba@keyconn.net or at 814-946-8840 for more details.

Upcoming Events Sponsored by Community Partnerships RC&D

August 28, 2010 from 1-7 pm.

Pennsylvania Canal Celebration in Mifflintown

The event will include two performing and educational areas, an environmental area and artist/culture area. This will be expanded from last year with a bigger and better time learning about the outdoors and historic significance of the area. Vendors should contact the office 717-248-4901.

September 20-24, 2010

Community Partnerships RC&D Annual Grant Writing Workshop

This weeklong workshop will be held in Shamokin Dam in Snyder County. The cost is \$535 for the weeklong event that introduces the attendee to grant searches, grant writing terminology, budgeting, proposal preparation, and much more. Please call the office at 717-248-4901 for more information.

The Conservation Stewardship Program May Be a Good Fit for Your Farm

By Dave Steele, Coordinator, Southern Alleghenies RC&D Area

The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) is a voluntary conservation program that encourages producers to address resource concerns on their property by undertaking additional conservation activities, and improving, maintaining and managing existing conservation activities. Through CSP, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) provides financial and technical assistance to eligible applicants to conserve and enhance soil, water, air, and related natural resources on their land. CSP is available on Tribal and private agricultural lands, as well as for nonindustrial private forest lands (NIPF) in all 50 States, the District of Columbia and the Caribbean and Pacific Islands Areas. The program provides equitable access to all producers, regardless of operation size, crops produced, or geographic location. One unique aspect of CSP is that it will fund establishment of certain conservation practices that protect stream corridors and create wildlife habitat on eligible crop, pasture and forest land.

Persons, entities, corporations, and Indian Tribes may be eligible for the program. Eligible lands include cropland, grassland, prairie land, improved pastureland, rangeland, NIPF, and agricultural land under the jurisdiction of an Indian tribe. Potential applicants interested in entering into a stewardship contract for CSP assistance may file an application at any time at their local USDA Service Center. Applicants must be the operator of record in the USDA farm records management system for the eligible land being offered for enrollment and must have documented control of the land for the term of the proposed contract. Landowners or operators must include the eligible land in their entire agricultural operation, as represented for other USDA programs and they will need to supply information necessary to determine eligibility and to rank the application. Requested information may include, but is not limited to, conservation and production records, and evidence documenting control of the land.

NRCS provides a producer self-screening checklist to help potential applicants decide for themselves whether CSP is the right program for them and their operation. The checklist focuses on basic information about CSP eligibility requirements, contract obligations, and potential payments. For approved applicants, NRCS will request the applicants' conservation activity records and conduct on-site field verification to substantiate that CMT resource inventory information provided by the applicant was accurate prior to contract approval.

After the conservation system information is verified, NRCS and the applicant proceed to develop a conservation stewardship plan and contract. The contract will obligate the participant to achieve a higher level of conservation performance by installing additional activities scheduled in the conservation stewardship plan, as well as to maintain the level of existing conservation performance identified at the time of application. Contracts cover the eligible land in the entire agricultural operation and are for five years. For all contracts entered into, CSP payments to a person or legal entity may not exceed \$40,000 in any fiscal year, and \$200,000 during any 5-year period. Each CSP contract will be limited to \$200,000 over the term of the initial contract period.

For more information and updates about CSP and other Farm Bill topics, please refer to the U.S. Department of Agriculture Web site <http://www.usda.gov/farmbill>, or the Natural Resources Conservation Service Web site <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/csp/>.



Hiking Through Central Pennsylvania's Old-Growth Forests

by Dr. Stan Kotala

Upon hearing the term "old-growth" many people think of redwoods 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 pines, white oaks, tuliptrees, black gums and an extraordinarily thick understory of massive rhododendrons. The tallest trees in the Natural Area are white pines and tuliptrees 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.



Majestic old growth hemlocks and rhododendrons. Photo provided by Stan Kotala.

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.

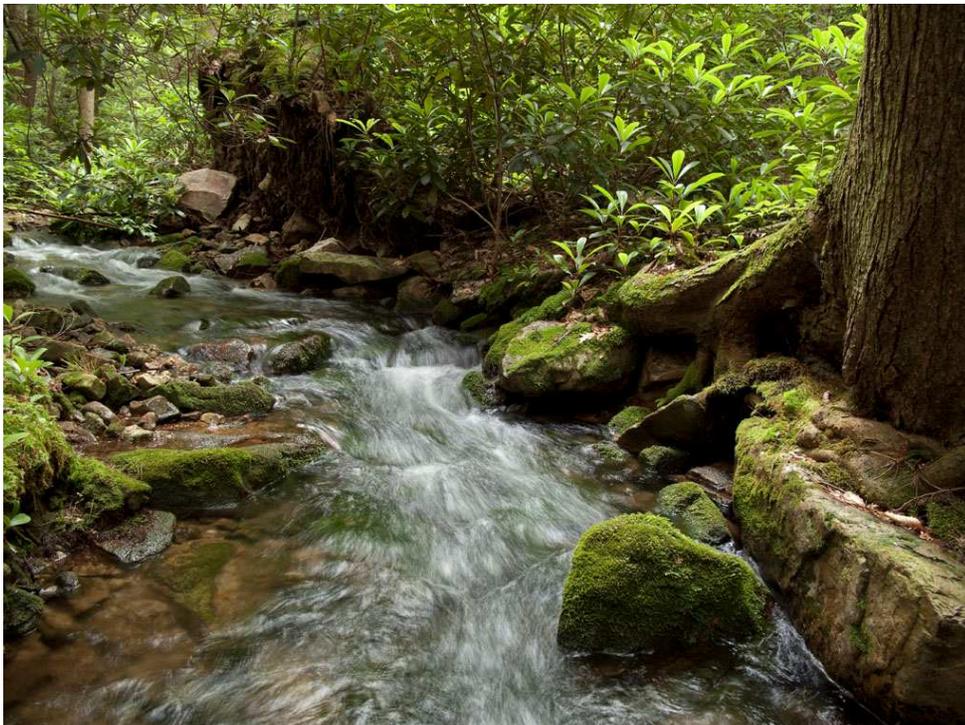
Stay on the trail as it makes a loop to the east and then south, crossing over Standing Stone Creek. You'll see towering eastern hemlocks, some more than five centuries old. The fallen giants (some close to 1,000 years old) resting among the 20-foot tall rhododendrons serve as nurse logs for many trees 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

Continued of page 11

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, 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.



"Whispy Water" photo by Mike Jackson, taken on the 2009 JCWP overnight hike.

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 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 of these State Forest Natural Areas and their birdlife are described in the new book *Birds of Central Pennsylvania* from Stone Mountain Publishing, available locally at Webster's Book Store and Appalachian Outdoors in State College and at the Shaver's Creek Environmental Education Center. 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.

Dr. Stan Kotala is the Conservation Chair for Juniata Valley Audubon www.jvas.org and a regular contributor to the JCWP newsletter.



The Juniata Clean Water Partnership (JCWP) is a non-profit coalition of conservation groups, county planners, conservation districts, watershed associations, and citizens. We have been assisting community groups, schools, and organizations in implementing watershed conservation projects and activities throughout the region for over nine years now.

In order to continue our programs and events we rely on our memberships and fundraisers. That is why your contribution is vital to our organization. Please consider becoming a member or renewing your JCWP membership. We greatly appreciate your support!

By becoming a member of JCWP you are entitled to attend the board of directors meetings and receive a daily discount on the annual sojourn. Memberships are valid on a yearly basis from January 1st to December 31st. On the membership form below identify the type of membership you would like, your name, contact information, and the amount enclosed. Mail the membership form and check to the JCWP office.

Juniata Watershed Journal

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Juniata Clean Water Partnership

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 Huntingdon, PA 16652

Web: www.jcwp.org
 Email: jcwp@jcwp.org
 Phone: (814) 506-1190
 Fax: (814) 506-1194

(Please cut off your Membership Form and send to the JCWP Office with your Check.)

JCWP 2010 Membership Form

Memberships received after September 1 will be credited towards a 2011 membership

Name: _____

Affiliation: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

E-mail: _____

Please select your level:

- \$500 Sustaining Member
- \$150 Corporate / Business
- \$50 Non-Profit / Government
- \$35 Watershed group / Family
- \$25 Individual
- \$10 Student

Additional Gift: \$ _____

Total Enclosed: \$ _____

Mail checks payable to the Juniata Clean Water Partnership to the address above.

Thank you for your support!

A membership entitles you to a discount on the sojourn!