



Kingfisher Courier

Newsletter of Appalachian Audubon Society

October 2009

October 15 “A Forest Story”

Join AAS for the second program of the season — *A Forest Story* with long-time AAS favorite, **Gene Wingert**. Gene will examine the history of the forest in south central Pennsylvania to present day. Forest ecology will be explained and changes in forest structure during the latter part of the twentieth century will be explored.

A major impact on our forest structure is the white-tail deer and fire suppression. This program examines the evidence of the impact of Pennsylvania’s State Mammal, and fires suppression in local forests including Waggoner’s Gap Hawk Watch area, SGL 170, and Michaux State Forest.

Gene has been a AAS member since 1972. He taught Biology at Cumberland Valley High School for 35 years, and currently teaches Biology and Environmental Science at HACC (since 1981) and Environmental Science and Biology at Dickinson College (since 1991). Gene is a familiar face in central Pennsylvania’s environmental arena, and we look forward to welcoming him back!

Appalachian Audubon monthly programs (September—May) take place on the 3rd Thursday of each month at the **Christ Presbyterian Church, 421 Deerfield Road, in the Allendale neighborhood of Camp Hill**. Join us at 7:00 pm for refreshments and conversation. The program begins at 7:30.



Deer overabundance can cause a marked reduction in species composition and richness in a forest. The absence of the seedling, sapling, and shrub layer, and a distinct “browse line,” are key indicators of deer overpopulation.

Both photos above were taken in the Pine Creek Gorge area. Note the difference between the top photo (showing a healthy understory) and the bottom photo.

A Tale of a Trail, a HawkWatch, and Ridge-top Property

By Paul Zeph

A lot has been happening at Waggoner’s Gap Hawk Watch over the past year, including new hiking trails, a safer watching site, and a new scenic overlook site! But, I’m getting ahead of myself.

First, let me back up and explain what led to all these new additions to the site. First, the purchase of the “Fogarty Tract” on the west

side of the AT&T tower was a key parcel that will enable Audubon Pa. to expand parking on that side of the road, with plans to construct handicapped-accessible hawk watching locations for both south and north viewing. Many AAS member contributed towards the purchase of the property, as part of our annual member appeal the past two years.

Securing this property, though, has led to the relocation of the Tuscarora Trail, which then led to other trail improvements on the east side of the road. The Tuscarora Trail is a primitive footpath that was established in the early 1960s. It begins on top of Blue Mountain where the Appalachian Trail (A.T.) crosses the mountain just west of Miller’s Gap (northwest of Mechanicsburg), and winds west along the

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Sharing Nature with Children

I read a touching story last week about a fatherless boy who was taken out on his first hunting trip by a man who was a friend of the boy's father. The father had died recently, and the friend knew how important it was to get children connected to nature by spending quality time outdoors. That story reminded me that we need to put more effort than ever to give young people nature experiences.

Studies are showing that young people are not being taken out to wild places by their parents or other relatives in the same way that previous generations did. Families are more disjointed, single-parent children are becoming the norm, and adults seem to have less free time to devote to their children. All of this is exacerbated by electronic games, the Internet, and our fear of unsupervised outdoor play and exploration.

Last month I wrote about our chapter's history with doing meaningful things. Think of the lasting impact we would have on the next generation if each AAS member spent a little time outdoors each season with a young person. It doesn't have to be a "Wow" experience in adult terms. I remember as a child creeping to a rock pile in the middle of a farm field to watch the red-winged blackbirds flock in the trees growing out of the pile. To me, that was exhilarating.

A close-up view of a Turkey Vulture at Waggoner's Gap, or a quiet hike for a mile or two along the Appalachian Trail could be that indelible experience that changes a child's life. Watching Great Egrets or Wood Ducks at Wildwood Lake, floating down one of the many area creeks, bike riding on a rail-trail, or just strolling through a park are but a few of the myriad opportunities we have in central Pennsylvania. Find a young person in need of an adult nature guide to share your enthusiasm and reverence for the natural world. Nothing could be more meaningful.



Plant Sale Thanks!

Thank you to all who participated in this year's Native Plant Sale on September 13! Ten percent more people bought plants this year than last year, raising more than \$1,000 for our education and conservation programs.

Five properties were recognized as successful bird habitats by Steve Saffier, AAH Coordinator, and signs went home to each property to help educate neighbors. With each plant sale we promote, more people are educated about the benefits of planting natives, and native habitat in central Pennsylvania is improved one yard at a time.

(Photo: Visitors to Meadowood Nursery photograph a monarch caterpillar.)

Hawk Watch continued

Kittatinny Ridge through the Tuscarora State Forest, southwest to the Tuscarora Ridge, then south through Maryland. The trail eventually rejoins the A.T. on the crest of the Blue Ridge Mountains northeast of Luray, Virginia.

When the Tuscarora Trail was being developed, however, it had to be routed around Waggoner's Gap into the valley below due to a large private sanctuary blocking the way that, at the time, did not permit hikers to utilize the property.

Once the Fogarty property was purchased, that cleared the way for the trail to come up on top of that part of the ridge, and the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club (PATC) went to work securing agreements from other landowners along the top of the ridge, east and west of the Gap. In addition, the trustees of the sanctuary have now agreed

to allow the trail to weave back and forth across the property boundary on top of the ridge to make a smoother trail for hikers.

PATC has a large crew of expert rock-moving trail builders, and they have been hard at work making the rugged trail passable along the boulder-strewn top of the ridge. In addition, these strong-backed volunteers assisted Audubon in the construction of a new trail leading east from the Hawk Watch, then winding down the slope to the parking lot.

Lastly, PATC brought in heavy-duty boulder-moving winches and relocated a number of table-sized rocks at the Hawk Watch to make a safer place to walk and view the migration spectacle.

If you go up there now, you will see several loops of trails, new interpretive signs about the raptors,

and a new lookout. The relocated part of the wild Tuscarora Trail will be officially open in spring 2010 that will take hikers to exciting new places! And, in addition to the future changes yet to be made around the AT&T tower, a walking bridge is being planned to take visitors safely across route 74, though it will take several years for that to be completed.

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*Below left: Aerial photograph showing Waggoner's Gap Hawk Watch illustrating new and existing site features.*

### Audubon Pa needs volunteers

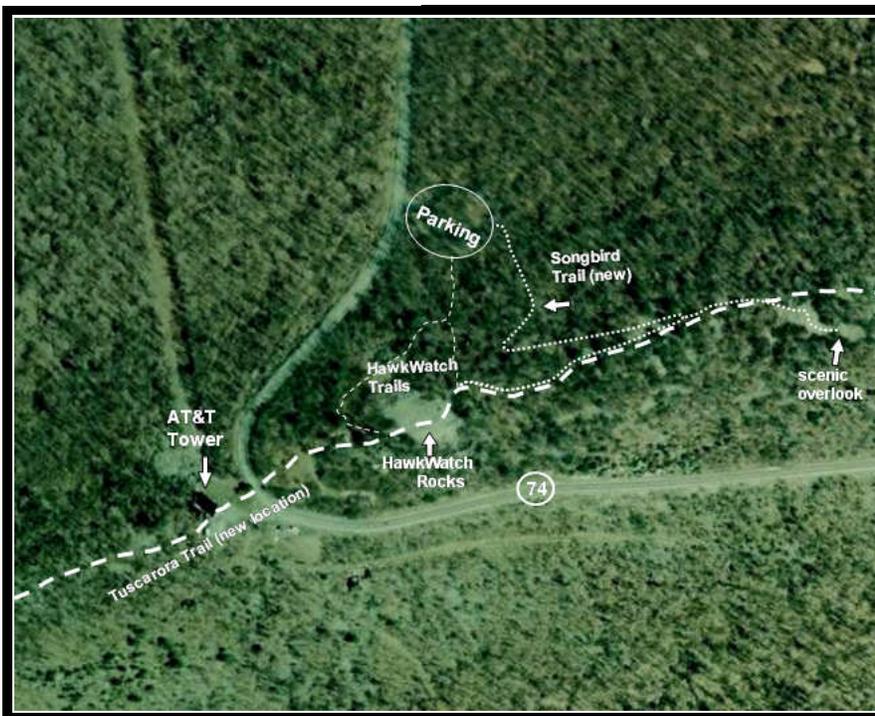
**Do you like maps and mapping technology? Do you like working on the computer?**

Audubon Pennsylvania is seeking volunteers to work at home on their own computer, at their own pace to help as the *Susquehanna River Birding and Wildlife Trail* online guide ([pabirdingtrails.org](http://pabirdingtrails.org)) becomes the ***Pennsylvania Birding and Wildlife Guide***. The new guide will include all Pennsylvania counties.

Audubon Pa. needs assistance:

- Acquiring latitude/longitude for existing locations using Google Earth (or equivalent);
- Placing a 'pin' on a map indicating the site location (training will be provided);
- Uploading new site description information.

If you are accustomed to using textboxes and Google maps, you have the skills you need! Please contact **Holly Smith** at 960-9441 or [hsmith@audubon.org](mailto:hsmith@audubon.org).





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October 2009

Appalachian Audubon Society

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

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**Remember:**  
**Pick up your bird seed!**  
Friday, Oct 2, 3-7pm  
Saturday, Oct 3, 9am-2pm  
**Walk-in sales available**

### Also inside:

#### **Thursday, October 15th**

Monthly public program featuring  
naturalist and biologist  
**Gene Wingert** with  
"A Forest Story"

Update on Waggoner's Gap  
Hawk Watch

**Looking for something  
meaningful & fun to do?**

See page 3 for an  
opportunity to use your talents

### **Upcoming Field Trips**

**Saturday, October 17**

*Waggoner's Gap Birding Trip*

Contact Pete Fox at 583-2639

(before 9 pm please) or

[pfox@faiderweb.org](mailto:pfox@faiderweb.org) for details.

**Sunday, November 8**

(raindate is November 15)

*Waterfowl at Middle Creek WMA*

Contact Art Shiavo at 520-5711 or

[aschiavo@hersheypa.com](mailto:aschiavo@hersheypa.com).

### **More reasons to attend our monthly meetings!**

In addition to communing with like-minded birders and hearing a great speaker, AAS also offers: COFFEE (organic, shade-grown, fair-trade), GIANT GROCERY CARDS, BIRDING LISTS, and HATS for sale at the meetings. Please see the display tables during refreshments & conversation prior to the program!

**Save Trees and  
Mailing Costs! Receive the  
E-version of the  
Kingfisher Courier!**

Recognizing a national trend of organizations converting from paper newsletters to e-versions, AAS would like to offer you an option of receiving the **Kingfisher Courier** by e-mail.

This will result in a significant cost savings to the chapter!

To receive the e-version, please send an email **from the account that you wish to receive the email notice** to [appaudubonsoc@yahoo.com](mailto:appaudubonsoc@yahoo.com) or call Ed Smith at 717-960-9441.

Thank you very much for considering this option! Please address any questions to Ed at the contact information above, and include your name in the text of the email.