



Moshannon Group News



Moshannon Group of the Pennsylvania Chapter of the Sierra Club

February 2004

Issue 1

February 11, General Meeting:

Trekking in Bhutan



Karin Constant traveled with the Sierra Club on a three week trip, that included Bangkok as the "jump-off" city, to the Himalayan country of Bhutan. Bhutan has tried to maintain its traditional ways, while at the same time encouraging limited tourism. Karin will present a slide show of people and mountains in western Bhutan, a small kingdom located east of Nepal and north of India. The trip included cultural experiences as well as two treks from 8,000 to 16,000 feet. Join us at our February 11 General Meeting to meet Karin, to hear about and to see slides of this trip.

Tussey Mountain Declared Important Bird Area

By Dr. Stan Kotala, IBA Coordinator, Canoe Creek Watershed IBA

BirdLife International, a worldwide conservation organization, developed the Important Bird Areas program in the 1980s in an effort to preserve outstanding habitats for birds. The program's resounding success in Europe quickly spread to North America where the IBA concept has become pivotal to a continent wide bird conservation strategy.

Pennsylvania was the first state to develop an IBA program. Based on strict scientific criteria developed by the Ornithological Technical Committee of the

(Continued on page 2)

EVENTS CALENDAR

GENERAL MEETINGS

General Meetings are held at the Centre Furnace Mansion and Historical Society at Porter Road and East College Ave.

Wednesday, **February 11, 7PM:** Guest speaker: Karin Constant will present a slide show of people and mountains in western Bhutan, a small kingdom located east of Nepal and north of India. This was a 3-week long Sierra Club trip and included cultural experiences as well as 2 mountain treks from 8,000 to 16,000 feet. Bangkok was the "jump-off" city.

Wednesday, **March 10, 7PM:** Guest speaker: Joanne Shafer, Centre County Recycling Coordinator will speak about recycling.

Wednesday, **May 12, 7PM:** Guest speaker: Chris Reese will speak about his bicycling trek from coast to coast this past fall.

OUTINGS

Saturday, **March 20:** Hike of about 7 miles at Trough Creek State Park, Huntingdon County. Contact Ben Cramer at 237-4187 or doomsdayer520@yahoo.com.

Saturday, **April 17:** Hike of about 6 miles on the Thousand Steps Trail near Mount Union in Huntingdon County. Contact Ben Cramer at 237-4187 or doomsdayer520@yahoo.com.

Sunday, **May 16:** Mountain bike ride on 15 miles of trails, some unmarked, in the Black Moshannon area with Chris Reese—our May guest speaker who last Fall bicycled across the United States. Contact: Chris Reese: 342-2505.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETINGS

These meetings are held on the **first Wednesday** of the month; they are open to all members. Call an Executive Committee Member for the next meeting location.



March 10, General Meeting:

Recycling

Joanne Shafer will be the guest speaker at our March General Meeting. Joanne is the Centre County, PA Recycling Coordinator. She manages the county-wide recycling program, including curbside collection from 18,000 households, a system of over one hundred drop-off sites, commercial recycling from 350 establishments and a source separated Materials Recovery Facility with a yearly capacity of 15,000 tons. With the Centre County Solid Waste Authority since 1990, she is also responsible for recycling public education throughout Centre County and coordinating special collections. Joanne is a past president of PROP, the Professional Recyclers of Pennsylvania, and chairs the state-wide Recycling Professional Certification Committee.



Current Moshannon Group Executive Committee

Standing left to right: Ron Johnson, Judy Tanner, Ronn Brouman, Ben Cramer, Gary Thornbloom, Hilary Vida.. Seated: Bill Tanner. Gary, Ron, and Ronn were elected in the recent election.

Tussey Mountain *(Continued from page 1)*

Pennsylvania Biological Survey, eighty sites have been selected as IBAs in the Keystone State.

At its most recent meeting, in September 2003, the Ornithological Technical Committee voted to confer the distinction of Important Bird Area on Tussey Mountain, a seventy-five-mile-long ridge extending from Boalsburg in Centre County to the Maryland border. The primary criterion for this designation was the importance of Tussey Mountain as a flyway for raptors, particularly golden eagles. Tussey Mountain has the highest concentration of spring migrating golden eagles east of the Mississippi! The site is commonly known as "the spring golden eagle capital of the east." The Tussey Mountain Hawkwatch, administered by the Shavers Creek Environmental Center, counted nearly 200 golden eagles migrating north this year at the site along Route 26 above Pine Grove Mills.

The Tussey Mountain IBA is contiguous with the Thickhead Wild Area/Stone Mountain IBA and the Frankstown Branch of the Juniata River IBA. Together with the Canoe Creek Watershed IBA and the Bald Eagle Ridge IBA, it is the fifth IBA in the upper Juniata Watershed. Of these, only the Canoe Creek Watershed IBA (coordinator Dr. Stan Kotala) and the Frankstown Branch of the Juniata River IBA (coordinator Dave Kyler) have been adopted by Juniata Valley Audubon for yearly monitoring using point counts as suggested by Audubon Pennsylvania Director of Bird Conservation Steve Hoffman. The Thickhead Wild Area/Stone Mountain IBA has been adopted by the State College Bird Club under the leadership of Greg Grove.

The designation of Important Bird Area gives Tussey Mountain an advantage when conservation initiatives are considered by the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. At this spring's "Green Infrastructure" conference at Shippensburg University, DCNR's Meredith Hill named Tussey Mountain as one of the "spine greenways" that will be given conservation priority. Tussey is also home to a large portion of the Mid State Trail. Fortunately, ninety percent of Tussey Mountain is public land, including, from north to south, parts of Rothrock State Forest, State Game Land 118, State Game Land 73, State Game Land 97, and parts of the Buchanan State Forest!

You may want to spend some time at the Tussey Mountain Hawkwatch next spring. The time to see golden eagles is March and April. The hawkwatch is located above the village of Pine Grove Mills, in Centre County, on the west side of Route 26 as it crests Tussey Mountain, south of the Jo Hays Vista. Much more information, including detailed directions to the site, is available on the hawkwatch's Web page www.users.fast.net/~aquilac/tussey/index.html. Hope to see you there early next year!

Winter Sports in Central Pennsylvania

by Ben Cramer, Outings Chair

Outdoor sports enthusiasts in Pennsylvania need not stay indoors all winter, beset by boredom and cabin fever. Anyone with the ability to bundle up a little and face some not-so-brutal challenges can hike, ski, or even camp in our great state during the winter.

Such death-defying acts of outdoor fortitude merely require some extra preparation, and knowledge of Pennsylvania's weather patterns and geography. The relatively benign winters that are typical for central Pennsylvania (except for occasional blizzards and deep freezes) do not require ultra-professional outdoor clothing of the type used by Himalayan mountaineers or Antarctic explorers.

For the active outdoor enthusiast of average health and ability, waterproof boots, quality socks and gloves, thermal underwear, and a good coat or parka should be sufficient for all but the most brutal days. On a typical winter day with a temperature in the twenties or lower thirties, common sense will keep you sufficiently warm.

The more important weather-related challenges in this region are wind and sun. The wind chill factor can pose real danger even on relatively warm days, so avoid windy conditions whenever possible. The wind is especially harsh and biting on central Pennsylvania's ridge tops, as well as in the valleys. Chafing from the wind, along with general exposure to the wind chill, make maximum coverage of the face and hands imperative.

Bright sunlight, while uplifting for the spirit, can also have harsh consequences in the winter as it reflects off the snow. This can result in sunburn and snow blindness. When skiing in sunny conditions, ski goggles or high quality sunglasses are a necessity. Eyewear can also be a great help when hiking in the winter, though beware that your peripheral vision will be compromised. This can be a real problem on narrow or undeveloped trails. Like the wind, the sun can present a serious challenge on the ridge tops and in the valleys. However, heavily forested areas in hollows or on hillsides provide considerable protection from the wind and sun.

The other important consideration for winter sports is geography. Central Pennsylvania is divided by the Allegheny Front into the ridge and valley region (east and south) and the plateau region (west and north). The more rugged topography in the ridge and valley region will limit casual enthusiasts to the valleys. Hiking and cross-country skiing can be enjoyed at the valley-level state parks (such as Bald Eagle in Centre County), and often on back roads for the more ramble-inclined.

On the other hand, the extremely rocky ridges of this region provide virtually zero opportunities for skiing. Hiking should only be attempted by experienced hikers, who preferably have crampons or other adequate footwear for the possibly dan-

gerous conditions. Expect miles of sharp rocks covered with ice and snow for most of the region's ridge tops. For this reason, the famous hiking trails that follow the ridges, including the Mid-State, Link, and Tuscarora Trails, are not recommended for beginners in winter.

The highlands above the Allegheny Front, with their scenic but less rugged topography, provide a treasure trove of outdoor opportunities for the adventurous. Large public areas such as Black Moshannon State Park (Centre County) and Quehanna Wild Area (Clearfield/Cameron/Elk Counties) provide dozens of miles of "soft" and mostly level trails that are perfect for both cross-country skiing and hiking.

Foot travel also becomes easier on such established highland paths as the Susquehannock and Chuck Keiper Trails. Winter hiking offers aesthetic treats as well, from snow-fringed streams and picturesque vistas, to easier wildlife viewing. When hiking in the plateau areas however, consider the depth of the snow pack, which can become considerable in the later winter months. Snowshoes may be necessary, both for safety and for conserving your personal energy, because hiking in deep snow becomes unexpectedly tiring.

Editors Note: winter hikers should be considerate to cross country skiers by avoiding walking on cross country ski trails. Deep tracks left by hikers results in "Postholing" which not only ruins the ski track but can pose a hazard to skiers.

For those interested in organized sports, central Pennsylvania also features several public ski areas. These include Denton Hill in Potter County, Tussey Mountain near State College, Blue Knob south of Altoona, and several resorts along Laurel Mountain between Johnstown and Pittsburgh. At these resorts you don't have to worry about mobs of Colorado-style ski fanatics, and instead can enjoy beginner- to intermediate-level skiing and snowboarding, and even snow tubing on special occasions.

With quality winter clothing, knowledge of the local weather conditions and terrain, and good old common sense, Pennsylvania's outdoor enthusiasts need not vegetate indoors and wait for spring to arrive.

ECO-TIPS: Reduce. Reuse. Recycle.
Recycling paper, glass, and metal saves 70-90% of the energy and pollution required to manufacture products from virgin materials.—
Sierra Club.

**Moshannon Group of the
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We're on the web!—<http://pennsylvania.sierraclub.org/moshannon/>

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Read **On The Trail** a monthly column in the **Centre Daily Times** that is devoted to hiking, cross-country skiing, canoeing, and snowshoeing in Central Pennsylvania. Moshannon Group members Ben Cramer, Dave Coleman and Gary Thornbloom have been writing this column since February 2002. The column is now scheduled to appear on the first Sunday of each month on the **Woods & Waters** page of the Sports Section. The column can also be viewed online at www.centredaily.com.

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