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The Hemlock

Volume 3, Issue 2 (November 2009)

"I like sometimes to take rank hold on life and spend my day more as the animals do. Perhaps I have owed to this employment and to hunting, when quite young, my closest acquaintance with Nature. They early introduce us to and detain us in scenery with which otherwise, at that age, we should have little acquaintance." --Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*



Hunting Allies



Welcome back. Although this issue features our normal diversity of articles, several of them focus on the topic of hunting. One of the interests of the [Environmental Focus Group](#) is the culture of central Pennsylvania, and in late fall, nothing defines that culture more clearly than hunting. While some might find it troubling that a journal devoted to environmental issues would endorse hunting, it is important to remember that the split between "tree-huggers" and "Bambi killers" is relatively recent. As John Reiger points out in *American Sportsmen and the Origins of Conservation* (1975), the early conservation movement was driven by the hunting and fishing community, and many of the patron saints of environmentalism--Henry David Thoreau, John Burroughs, Aldo Leopold--were avid hunters. At a time when our state forests and game lands are threatened, those who love being in the outdoors--hikers, hunters, anglers, and environmentalists--need to work together to protect those areas for future generations.

You may have noticed that our web address is different. Thanks to Scott Eldridge and John Reid (*The Hemlock's* new webmaster), there is now a *Hemlock* site on the LHU server. We hope to add features to [The Hemlock home page](#) in the near future. And, in case you missed it, Jason Seyler wrote an excellent [article on The Hemlock](#) for the October 15th *Eagle Eye*. As always, we encourage you to contact [Bob Myers](#) if you'd be interested in contributing to *The Hemlock*. Perhaps a short article on your favorite state park and why you love

it? A review of a book that deals with the outdoors or environmentalism? Reports on your outdoor-related club's activities?

Outdoor Recreation Equipment Available for Students

Thanks to the hard work of Student Rec Center Director Brad Dally, LHUP students can rent outdoor recreation equipment at a reduced price. Brad has worked out an agreement with Lock Haven's outdoor outfitter, Rock River & Trail, to make equipment available to LHUP students at a 10% discount. Available equipment

includes kayaks, backpacking gear (tents, sleeping bags, backpacks), bikes, and snowshoes. A shuttle service is also available. The complete list can be seen [online](#).



Hunting Cabin

--by Paul Leah (LHU Elementary Education Major)

The best time spent as a hunter is not in the woods, but in the cabin. Don't get me wrong; I love to be in the woods, but when the day is over, I know the fun has just begun. While I am in the woods, I am looking forward to sitting next to a nice fire with my close friends and family. After all, the cabin holds all of the essentials to a hunter, such as heat, shelter, food, water, friends, family, bragging, cocktails, poker, toilet paper, and of course, a place to lay his head at night.

I believe I was ten years old when my father took my brother and me to our first hunting camp. I still remember walking into the cabin and being intoxicated by the smell of the food that was lingering in the air. When I got over the wonderful smell, I began to look around and saw a bunch of my dad's friends; they were all smiling at us. I met everyone and was shown where to put all of



my clothes and hunting accessories. When I was unpacked, I stepped into the main room and was told that it was time to work.

I have never liked to participate in chores, but eager to please the men around me, I jumped right

into the task. It was a beautiful, sunny day with about ninety percent humidity. I worked for hours cutting, splitting, and stacking wood. The sweat was continuously beading on my brow, and the pile of wood that needed to be stacked only got bigger. There was one point when I looked around and saw that everyone was as dirty and sweaty as I was, but they were all smiling and having fun. After that point, I decided to listen to them as they were talking; it helped me enjoy the laborious task that was still in front of me, and we all started joking with each other, which led to a great time. When all of the wood was cut and stacked, we all stopped almost simultaneously and marveled at all of the work that had been completed. It was a good day of work for sure; and there was only one thing that was wrong with the work being done. My stomach had been twisting and turning for the last hour. It was calling for me to eat something, but the work that I had been enjoying had not allowed me to feel hungry.

It did not take long to find out that everyone else was starving, too. Groans of men about their hunger were getting louder as we went inside, and to our satisfaction, we found out that dinner had been served. There was food mounded high on what seemed to be a buffet of deliciousness. There were elk roasts, sausage sandwiches, ham, gravy, soup, mashed potatoes, and about all of the other wonderful "man food" you can have in life, which included my mom's "camp famous" chocolate cookies. The "man feast" was great, but the company was even better. Everyone talked as if we were one family. We told stories of past hunts and fishing experiences and learned new and interesting facts about each other. The best part was that I got to sit right between my father and brother and talk about all of the day's events and dream of the opening day of deer season.

All of the men at the camp that had unfamiliar faces seemed to be turning into friends and family as the day went on. If I had just one point in my life that I could go back to, it would be that day, because it felt like Christmas morning when I was a child. Actually, it did turn to Christmas when "Santa" came to visit. It seems that two of the camp members owned beer distributors. The beer companies gave them free promotional hats, shirts, posters, coats, and key chains. Also about fifty percent of everyone there smoked cigarettes. Just before "hunting day eve," they all got together and came up with as many items as possible with their cigarette points. These items then turned out to be presents that "Santa" would hand out. The camp's founder, Tom Fed, Sr., who is now in the great hunting cabin in the sky, came out in a red Budweiser hat and red Budweiser shirt, ready to give all of us the mound of presents he had. We all gathered around and received presents. I only remember the one t-shirt that I got, which was the last one given. It was a blaze orange t-shirt with the camp logo right on it. The shirt was big on me then, but it now fits me perfectly,

and I wear it with pride on every opening day of rifle season. When that night came, I was over stuffed from piles of food and as happy as could be because of new friends; and well, the presents were just icing on the cake. The best part of that day was getting closer to my father and brother and getting to know them better.

My brother and I now have the same thing in common as we did back then, the love for the outdoors that was given to us by our father. Going to cabins was and still is the glue that keeps us together. We now have our own cabin, and when we are there after a day of hunting or fishing, we always have something to talk about. Remember when Santa came? Remember when you got your first buck? (Me) Remember when I took you to get your first buck? (My brother) Remember when I took you out and we both shot bucks from the same tree in half an hour? (Me) Yes, there is always a running competition. He is up on me right now, but as I tell him, he has hunted for four more years than I have, and I think I am winning the buck-to-year ratio. And I do have the biggest fish in recorded Leah history. I can't remember a time at any hunting or fishing cabin that I haven't had a good time. Cabins have been places where I could relax, think, and have fun. In going to cabins, I have grown into a man. They have taught me communication skills with new people, the rewards of hard work, patience (sitting alone in the woods for ten hours straight), and what it means to have true friends. I can't wait for this next season to start so I can laugh, smile, and frankly, brag all over again.

The Pine Creek Rail Trail

--Sandra Barney (LHU History Professor)

A visit to the [Pine Creek Rail Trail](#) gives me hope. In an era of vicious political wrangling, eroding funding for public institutions, and an apparent



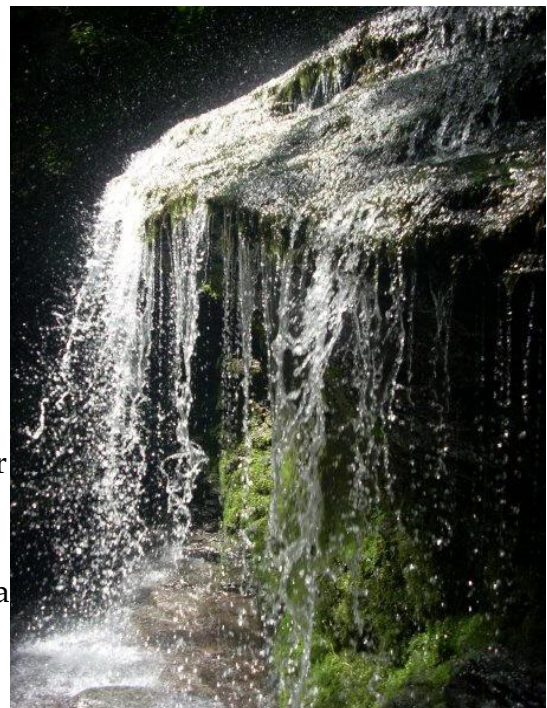
abandonment of the social contract, a day of bicycling along Pine Creek reminds me of the good that public/private ventures can produce. Part of the national Rail Trail system described by [Lenny Long in a previous issue](#) of the Hemlock, the Pine Creek Trail is an often overlooked treasure located only half an hour from Lock Haven.

The trails along Pine Creek served as a thoroughfare for Native Americans for centuries before Europeans arrived on the continent. In the colonial period, Ulster Scots immigrants, or Scotch Irish as they are often

labeled, settled along the creek and forged a living from the land. Isolated from the broader river valleys and their burgeoning agricultural and commercial development, Pine Creek Valley was not a focus of economic exploitation until the 1820s. In that decade developers became aware of the expanses of uncut timber in the region and an era of unrestrained deforestation began. Between 1820 and 1920 millions of trees were cleared and sold. To move timber from isolated sawmills along the creek, the Jersey Shore, Pine Creek, and Buffalo Railroad was opened in 1883. According to the [Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources](#), "by 1896 [the train] was carrying seven million tons of freight and three passenger trains on daily runs between Wellsboro Junction and Williamsport." In 1988, after more than a hundred years of rail traffic, the line was closed. Local supporters initiated the establishment of a multi-use rail trail along Pine Creek soon after rail service was terminated.

The trail can be accessed at many points along its 60-mile length, but the Grand Canyon of Pennsylvania serves as the northern entry point. Entering the trail at Ansonia (near Wellsboro), a bike rider is soon engulfed by the tranquility and majesty of the canyon. This is the most isolated section of the trail, although Leonard Harrison State Park and Colton Point State Park anchor the hills above the valley floor. The joy of biking a rail trail is that, unlike true mountain biking, a rider of any ability or fitness can successfully navigate the gradual grades and broad paths of an old rail line. When biking through the Grand Canyon of Pennsylvania, the rider is able to experience the delights of being deep in the woods without facing the daunting physical challenges of an extended backpacking or biking trip.

After leaving the Pine Creek Gorge Natural Area at Blackwell, the creek and the trail, are paralleled by highway 414. Traveling so close to a paved road may seem unappealing, but the road's unobtrusive presence makes it possible to park a car or to be dropped off in a number of different locations. At Rattlesnake Rock, for example, you might park your car, ride ten miles out to Tiadaghton, return, and slip your canoe or kayak into the water for an afternoon of paddling. Hoffman Campground is just across the creek so you could settle in for a weekend of paddling and riding. This section of the trail would be particularly attractive to someone looking for water



sports or fishing since Cedar Run and Slate Run both enter Pine Creek just south of Rattlesnake Rock.

Below Slate Run the trail settles into a mixture of forest and agriculture. It is easy to imagine the damage that was done to this land when the trees were being cut a hundred years ago. Second and third generation reforestation efforts are impressive, but it is clear that the land has been permanently transformed by timbering and agriculture. As the trail winds down towards Waterville the rider observes a number of small hunting camps and second homes. These serve as a wonderful reminder of the rich history of hunting and recreation in the Pennsylvania woods. Such camps, as well as the deer and black bear that regularly show up along the trail, serve to remind the rider to wear orange during the appropriate times of the year and not to stray from the established path.

Jersey Shore is the southern terminus of the trail, but many riders might want to drive the additional ten miles to Waterville. [Little Pine Creek State Park](#) is located nearby, and offers camping, hiking, and lake activities. An old fashion general store offers supplies in Waterville and there are restaurants available for those who want someone else to do the cooking after a long day on the trail.

Efforts are underway to link Castanea to the rail train in Jersey Shore, putting the Pine Creek Trail within even easier reach of Lock Haven residents and students.

"The Story of Job": The Drawings of Jeremiah Johnson

--Bob Myers (LHU English Professor)

As I was coming out of Sloan Auditorium a few weeks ago, I was immediately struck by the exhibit in the Sloan Gallery, a collection of drawings by Williamsport artist Jeremiah Johnson. How could I resist an artist whose primary theme is central Pennsylvania history and monuments?

The exhibit, which runs until November 7th, is well worth seeing. The collection is entitled "The Story of Job" and is the work of Johnson's alter ego, [Job Johnson](#), a fictional/historical artist who lived in central Pennsylvania from 1860 to 1937. Jeremiah notes that with this project, he is "interested in blurring the lines between fact and



fiction through art, history, and folklore." Job's works are graphite drawings on hand-made paper and they are beautifully framed with branches. The initial impression is that the drawings seem like primitive folk art, but closer examination reveals a sophistication of both technique and subject matter.

Johnson goes through a complicated process to create these works. "I start with making paper from scraps of mat board that I get from the frame shop. I make about 10 to 20 sheets at a time in my basement and lay them out in the sun to dry. Then I make the drawings, from a variety of sources--landscapes from life and photographs, old photographs of places that don't exist. I also make drawings from stories that people tell me and a lot of folklore that I read from different books. I collect all of this information and make thumbnail sketches in Job Johnson's Sketchbook, and then work on the finished drawings. After the drawings are done I build the frames from collected scraps of wood, either raw wood from tree branches from fallen trees in my pap's woods, or old used scraps of wood like old apple crates or from pallets."

One central theme is the environmental history of central Pennsylvania. Johnson is interested in "People that were inseparable from their environment. They were dependent upon nature for survival." Perhaps my favorite is "Last Great Pine," which was allegedly drawn in 1923. Johnson invokes the sadness of this solitary remnant of the huge white pine forest that covered Pennsylvania. Johnson is also fascinated with the folklore of this area, including ghost stories. He explains that his inspiration for this work came after a trip to Ireland: "When I came back I started taking walks with my dad and my brother in the woods; we'd go exploring for different places that were talked about by family or in various regional history and folklore books. I wanted a way to preserve these lost landmarks before they all disappear. I also got lost in the old photographs from past decades. They only provide a glimpse into a dark and mysterious past. The way people used to live and work each day just to survive. These ideas sparked the Job Johnson Project."

Johnson, who can trace his central Pennsylvania roots back to the 1760s, was born in Jersey Shore and grew up in Clinton and Lycoming counties. He received a B.F.A. in Printmaking from the Tyler School of Art of Temple University, and then a Masters in Print, Paper and Book Arts from Syracuse University. Currently he teaches arts and crafts courses at Pennsylvania College of Technology and the Public Art Academy at the Pajama Factory in Williamsport. For more information about Johnson, visit [jeremiah's website](#), where you can see more of his works. He can be contacted by email at jj@jeremiahjohnsonart.com.

Hiking with Emmy

--Bill Shetler (LHU English Major)

Unless it's raining, it's almost always a good time to go hiking. Such were my thoughts when I decided to take my three-year old daughter for her first real hike.

It was a typical cool and cloudy day in May. We strapped on our backpacks. Mine was filled with the usual essentials and hers . . . well, she had need of extra goodies, which consisted mostly of Crabby-Patties (gummy candy) and juice boxes.

We set off into the mountains south of McElhattan. We hadn't gone very far when I heard her sweet little voice, floating like soft bubbles in the air, "Daddy, carry me." She was tired, so I loaded her into my kid carrier backpack. As I was lugging her down the trail, she had a good time singing and tapping on my head. I was smiling because she was happy, and yet I also felt a little worried. I usually hike alone, and this trip was to be my chance to share with my daughter how much I enjoy the outdoors and to have her develop an appreciation for the forest. I was afraid that she was bored and would want to go home. I wanted

this day to be different. I wanted to see some magic happen for her.



Suddenly, as we passed a patch of flowers, she cried, "Daddy, I want down!" She ran to the patch of Johnny Jump-ups and dandelions and immediately began examining them with interest. As it turned out, this was the beginning of her desire to know the forest. The day turned out to be wonderful for both of us. Our hike

became a majestic exploration of the wonders of nature. As we hiked along, she would stop to inspect anything that caught her eye. As many of you know, an intelligent three year old can find countless questions to ask. And "because" is not an acceptable answer.

At one point, she fell behind, and when I walked back I saw the lifeless stems and petals of a few flowers. In her hands were the remains of several. "Emily, please stop decapitating the dandelions," I said when I recognized what she was doing. "Why, dad? It's fun," she replied. I tried, "Because the flowers are pretty, and if you don't pick them, they might be here for you to see another day." It was a sound answer, but didn't seem to quash her desire to pop the heads off of the dandelions. She kept it up all day long.

We hiked for five hours that day, climbing the southern side of Round Top Mountain, exploring and having a great time at it. Her little legs weren't up for the climb up or down the mountain, but she sure was a little trooper that day. We took a few snack breaks and I have to admit that those juice boxes and crabby patties actually do make a good trailside snack.

It was utterly amazing to see the "magic" of my daughter's consciousness awakening to the simple, but exquisite beauty which is so readily available and accessible to us. I had hoped to teach her some of my love of nature that day, which I did, but in the process I also became a student. As I viewed her enjoyment along the trail, I regained some perspective which I had lost. I relearned what I had forgotten for so many years of hiking alone, that no matter how lovely or beautiful a mountain or forest is, it is made so much more so when you have someone to share it with.

For more information on the importance of introducing children to nature, see Richard Louv's *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature Deficit Disorder*, which was reviewed in the [May 2008 Hemlock](#) by Melissa Novak.

Middle Ground

--by Zach Fishel (LHU English Major). Photograph by Kerrie Kegg (LHU Exploratory Studies Major)



The leaves have changed from fiery fingers that caressed their loving sky to the dead brown grip of a bruise on the back of the now gloomy sky. I walk across the campus in awe. I see the last of autumn breathing a dying gasp as the strangling frost begins to thicken around the throats of those maples and cornstalks. The poor scarecrow wishes he had more than a

flannel on. Thanksgiving nears and I wonder if anyone will be thankful. I get to the student houses and see guard dogs and giant pumpkins with sharp crooked grins, assuring me that there isn't any trick to this treat. In a few days these giant orange faces will shrivel and turn black, the jagged teeth becoming blackened stumps.

I often take this short time for granted, the time between celebrating the harvest and the start of fresh snow and shortened days. There is a beauty in that moment before the burning sun is swallowed by the black assuredness of

winter. I try to hold on, like the last of the corn stalks, fighting against the frigid future. I feel stuck in between the freshman of fall and the graduates of winter. Like the seasons, I used to be bright and willing, now I am becoming cold and tired. Thankfully, I see the transition, and can feel life once again.

Marcellus Update

--by Bob Myers. Photograph courtesy of the [ForestCoalition](#)

As I indicated in the last issue, I will be providing regular updates on the environmental impact of natural gas drilling in the Marcellus Shale. Since the last *Hemlock*, Pennsylvania's 101-day budget battle has finally come to an end, and throughout the debate, the Marcellus Shale issue played a major role.



At first Governor Rendell and the Democrats supported a severance tax on natural gas, which would have put Pennsylvania in line with every other state where natural gas drilling occurs. The Republicans, on the other hand, supported

leasing an additional 390,000 acres of state forest land to the natural gas companies. On September 1st, Gov. Rendell indicated that he no longer supported the severance tax. The subsequent compromise that was worked out by House and Senate leadership on September 18 would have opened up 90,000 acres of the state forest to drilling. On October 2nd, in a surprise move, House Democrats rejected the compromise, and instead passed a bill with a severance tax. A key player in that move to protect the state forest was Rep. Mike Hanna. With little chance of success in the Republican-controlled Senate, the impasse dragged on until October 9th, when Gov. Rendell signed the budget.

The final budget is deeply disturbing for anyone concerned about the environment or outdoor recreation. The budget of the PA Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), the agency who will be responsible for regulating the burgeoning gas industry, was cut by 27%. The budget of the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR), who manages the state forests and parks, was cut by 19%. Furthermore, the DCNR is directed to lease sufficient acres of the state forest to produce \$60 million--at the current leasing rates, that means about 10,000 acres (*Philadelphia Inquirer*, "[Budget Cuts](#)

[Hamper](#)"). Finally, the Oil and Gas Lease Fund, which was created in 1955 to direct the money raised from leasing state lands to conservation projects, has been put on hold for this year--all money goes to the general fund.

Thus, while the worst nightmares were avoided through the efforts of several key lawmakers, this budget still represents a deep wound to the wild Pennsylvania that many of us love. To prevent an even worse scenario next year, it is important that Pennsylvania hunters, anglers, and environmentalists become politically active and vote out those legislators who have demonstrated their opposition to the preservation and protection of the woods and waters of our state. The *Philadelphia Inquirer* has published an excellent, and disturbing, analysis of the politics behind Gov. Rendell's decision to abandon the severance tax: "[How Marcellus Shale Came to be Tax Exempt in PA.](#)"

Bears

The following is a funny story that will remain in my family's hearts forever. My uncle, Don Kramer, loved animals and nature. On any given day, he would drive to the mountains to feed the wild animals on his land. He wrote this story in 2003 and submitted it to the Pennsylvania Game News (I don't think it was ever published). -- Tammie Houser (LHU Secretary to the Department of History, Political Science, Economics, and Foreign Languages)

I am presently a Farm Game Manager for the PA Game Commission, with 25 years of service. As I look toward retirement in the not so distant future, there are many memories that I will take with me. But none as bittersweet as the time in 1980 when I hunted bear with my son.

The day dawned with heavy rain. As my wife packed sandwiches and hot tea for our lunch, I could hear the rain pounding heavily on the roof, and I remember thinking that I should just go to work and forget about hunting. But then my 14-year-old son, Dan, emerged from his room carrying his Savage single shot 30-30. The excitement on his face told me that I could forget going to work.



When we reached the woods, the rain came harder than ever. We had scouted the area and had seen plenty of sign that the bear were in the area. We entered the woods and when we came to a large hemlock that looked like it would provide some protection from the weather, I told Dan that this would be his spot. I reminded him to make sure of his shot and to make sure that the bear stays

down. Little did I know he would do just that.

I found another hemlock for my spot. The first hour was uneventful, until I saw a beautiful 8-point buck, just 20 yards away. Suddenly a gun shot rang out, causing me to jump. As I started towards Dan's spot, I heard a second shot, and heard Dan shouting, "Dad, Dad!" As I ran toward the sound of his voice, the mountain laurel slapped my face and the rocks caused my feet to slip. But within minutes I was there.

Dan was standing in the spot I left him. He was shaking, perhaps from the cold, or perhaps from excitement. He told me that a bear came through the laurel and he shot at him. As he tried to reload his rifle, the shell flew onto the ground. By the time he picked up the shell, the bear appeared again, so he shot a second time. I pushed through the laurel and saw the bear. As I turned to congratulate Dan, I saw a second bear.

My heart sank as I realized the gravity of the situation. This was my first year as a deputy game officer and my son just shot two bears. We unloaded our guns, and Dan took them back to the truck. Meanwhile, I figured out what had happened. After he shot the first bear and was trying to pick up his shell, another bear appeared and he thought it was the same one. When Dan returned, I jokingly said, "Of course you know you're under arrest." We dragged the bears out, and when we arrived home I called the regional office and explained what happened. I was told to pay a fine of \$50 for a mistaken kill. Some time later, my father, Loyd Kramer, wrote a poem, "The Saga of Deadeye Daniel" to have some fun at our expense. The poem concludes:

Well the moral of the story is
Don't go hunting with your Dad
Even tho you kill two by mistake
You're liable to be had.
A case in point I'd like to make
Please allow me your permission
You see young Danny's father worked
For the PA Game Commission!
He turned young Danny in of course,
The proper thing to do
But Danny being under age
Dad paid the field fine too.

Night Notes

--by Mark Smith (LHU English Professor)

In October, those who know me pretty well start asking if I'm still sleeping outside or not. I tell them I'm holding out as best I can, but I foresee the end of it. It's getting chilly out here, and I'll be heading indoors for winter soon enough.

You see, I sleep outside nearly half the year, from May through October, in a big screened-in porch and I love it. When I first started this, I bought a cot for sleeping, but later found I much prefer an old couch since it blocks the wind during rainstorms and the cushions hold the heat better. This couch is too short though, so my feet stick out. I don't care. I love it. The cats like to sleep out here with me, mostly on me. Sleeping outside, I tune in to the slow progression of the summer, noticing the way the nights get shorter then longer again once we pass the solstice in June, and the way the nighttime temps reach a humid crescendo in August before slowly crawling down again. I have become very attuned to what goes on at night, and when.



The clearest, brightest nights are always early on, in May and June, so that's when, on nights when I have trouble sleeping, I set up my spotting scope out in the driveway, pull up a lawn chair, and look at Jupiter and its moons. Once in a while I can even see the rings of Saturn, though that's pushing the limits of my little scope. I watch these distant planets move slowly

westward through the night, and also through the year. One evening in June 2008 my father suffered a heart attack while visiting our farm out in Iowa. Here in Pennsylvania I was too far away (865 miles as the crow flies) to be there with him that night. When I tried to sleep I couldn't, so I just looked at Jupiter instead and found all four of the Galilean moons lined up perfectly at a distance of 390,414,000 miles. I watched them for a long time, thinking about my father, until some clouds moved in and blotted out the scene. My father and I have never been very close and when I finally pulled the blanket up to my chin that night, I drifted off while thinking about distances. 390,414,000 miles. 865 miles. How much of the distance between us is his? How much of it belongs to me? How much is the universe itself?

All this summer, usually between two and three in the morning, a neighborhood skunk has made his rounds through the yard. I call this my “skunk hour,” after the well-known poem by Robert Lowell, but my skunk hour is nothing like Lowell’s. His was a confrontation with mental illness; mine just brings a smile to my face. Usually I smell the skunk first, then I sit up and wait for his imminent arrival. A creature of routine and habit, he always comes round the side of the house, and walks close beside the porch, right up against the screen generally, before sidling off to the compost bin where I often leave him some choice leftovers. If I forget the treat, he loves to dig his way under the bin and make a mess of things. When he’s done with the compost he’s off again, trundling through the neighbor’s yard, just an undulant white stripe disappearing into the darkness.

At night, the mind focuses on sounds and smells instead of sight. The smell of rain in the distance. The sound of a sudden downpour hitting the porch roof. Wind in a spruce tree. Late-summer crickets. Even the street sweeper that comes by every Thursday morning at precisely four a.m. As the summer progresses we get more fog in the mornings, and it comes on surprisingly fast, usually after three in the morning. By four or five a.m. when I rouse from sleep I can smell the dampness of the fog and tell, even without opening my eyes, how thick it will be that morning.

I love to hear trains coming out of the west along Bald Eagle Creek, then turning to cut through the heart of town with horns sounding at every crossing. Each conductor has his own style of laying on the horn. Some use sharp staccato blasts while others prefer a sort of mournful, modulated wailing. One conductor always rings the bell—a very relaxed and quaint sort of sound. After the horn sounds, the reverberating, roundabout echoes bounce back from Bald Eagle Mountain, the Highland Cemetery hill, and the hills of Lockport across the river. The echoes last four or five times longer than the horn itself and slowly taper off into the distance.

I think my favorite night sounds are the nocturnal flight calls of migrating birds. These quick, sharp calls help the birds stay in touch with each other and stay on course through their night journey. Flight calls are very short notes, maybe a tenth of a second or less, but very sweet, often sounding like “cheep,” “tweet,” “weet,” or “sheet.” Every bird has its own, distinct call, but to us humans they often sound so much alike that ornithologists, and amateur enthusiasts as well, use computers to generate spectrograms of the calls in order to identify them. This technology is used to monitor migrations, determine flight patterns, even determine populations of particular songbirds. But I confess, I love most just to listen to the night calls and think about those tiny birds—the warblers, the thrushes, the tanagers—flying overhead on a journey that may take them all the

way to South America. Living rivulets of birds in the night sky. Bright and brave sounds to hear at midnight.

With all this going on, you might think I don't get much sleep out here on the porch, but I sleep very well indeed. Indoors I immediately miss the softness of the night air, and the open, aural spaciousness of it. I miss the giant *presence* of the outside of the world and feel rather confined in the silence of lathe and plaster, the dull rush of the furnace.

But seasons turn of course. The night notes of the birds are nearly gone now. A few laconic crickets cling to life, but with the nightly threat of frost the end is near. They go down singing, by the way, singing till the end. And with nights dipping down into the thirties, I'll be moving indoors again and hunkering down for the long winter. But even then, at night as I drift off to sleep, I'll be remembering all the night notes of the summer.

For more information about nocturnal flight calls, and to hear samples of them, check out ["Migrating Birds" by Bill Evans](#).

Hike of the Month: State Game Lands #255

--by Bob Myers



Last month's hike introduced you to the Pennsylvania State Forest; this month takes you to one of Pennsylvania's many State Game Lands. The hike is about 3 miles round trip and takes about an hour. Since we are in the midst of [hunting season](#), I recommend that you take this hike on a Sunday, when hunting is prohibited. If you

do go during the week, be sure to wear florescent orange and be respectful of those who are hunting. Since there are several stream crossings, boots are recommended. First-rate maps of the state game lands can be found at the [State Game Commission \(SGC\) site](#).

To get to the trailhead, begin at Walmart and turn right onto PA 150 South. Go .4 miles and after you cross the bridge, turn left onto Rt. 64/Water Street. Go .6 miles and turn right onto Church Street. Continue on Church Street/Mountain Road for 3.7 miles--on the left you will see a parking area with a portable toilet.

Go through the gate and proceed up the hill (southeast). Follow the broad path of clover up the hill as it passes several SGC food plots. These plots are what the SGC calls "habitat improvement," and they are designed to attract deer and provide them with forage throughout the winter. After about a half mile, the path turns left (east) and then reaches an intersection. Turn right and follow a pretty mountain stream up the hill (southeast) for about a third of a mile. At the next intersection, turn left (east) and follow a small stream uphill. For this part of the hike, you are between the twin ridges of Bald Eagle mountain. The path continues uphill for about a half mile, gradually leveling out, until it reaches a large clearing. You have now hiked about 1.5 miles. You can return to your car, but if you bushwhack to the left (north) for 700 feet, you will reach the top of the ridge--there are too many trees for a good view, even when the leaves are down, but you can see a bit of the Bald Eagle valley and even Lock Haven.



The [PA State Game Commission](#) was created in 1895 to restore the dwindling wildlife population. At the time, it was estimated that there were only 500 white-tail deer in Pennsylvania (the current population is about 1.5 million). Black bears and wild turkeys were nearly extinct as well. By regulating hunting and protecting wildlife habitats, the SGC has been able to restore or reintroduce the populations of deer, turkey, bears, bob cats, river otters, wood ducks, geese, beavers, fishers, and elk. The first State Game Land (SGL) was purchased in 1920; currently there are 287 SGLs. The SGC is not supported by tax revenues; instead its funding comes from hunting license fees, federal grants, and funds collected from the sale of oil, gas, coal, and timber obtained from State Game Lands. Wildlife protection is conducted by approximately 200 Wildlife Conservation Officers.

Thanks to John Reid, Elizabeth Gruber, Michael Myers, and Max for helping me plot this hike!

Environmental Focus Group

Bob Myers (chair), Md. Khalequzzaman, Lenny Long, Jeff Walsh, Danielle Tolton, John Crossen, Sandra Barney, David White, Tom Ormond, Ralph Harnishfeger, and Barrie Overton. The committee is charged with promoting and supporting activities, experiences, and structures that encourage students, faculty, and staff to develop a stronger sense of place for Lock Haven University and central Pennsylvania. Such a sense of place involves a stewardship of natural resources (environmentalism), meaningful outdoor experiences, and appreciation for the heritage of the region.