

# Wildlife Leadership Academy

by Molly Diefenbach

**I**T WAS A SHOCK to some of my friends as to why I would voluntarily give up cell phone service and Internet connection to learn about nature, something many of them have never even bothered thinking about. While most of my peers went to the beach or slept in until the crack of midday, I went to the Wildlife Leadership Academy, an intensive, 5-day field school. Attending this camp was the best decision I made that summer.

Even if you have no desire to pursue a career in the wildlife field or to become a hunter, WLA is still a great opportunity. Wildlife conservation is not just for hunters, but a responsibility that must be taken up by the community as well. As long as you are 14 to 17 years old, WLA could be the perfect summer opportunity, with a variety of activities including necropsies to learn about animal anatomy, team building challenges, and discussions with a range of

instructors from wildlife biologists and researchers to nature photographers. Game Commission officers and renowned naturalists were just some of the mentors that came to speak with us. The grouse camp, or PA Drummers, is not the only camp offered. Students choose between PA Drummers or PA Bucktails, which focuses on Pennsylvania's white-tailed deer.

If you do not meet the age requirements, encourage someone who does to enroll in this program. It is time for the next generation to step up and keep the traditions of hunting and the outdoors alive, which can only be accomplished with the knowledge and appreciation of wildlife management. You can learn more about the PA Drummers and PA Bucktails programs at [www.picweb.org](http://www.picweb.org). The deadline to apply for 2011 is in April, so hurry! □



Molly Diefenbach lives in central Pennsylvania where she hunts grouse, woodcock, deer, turkey and bear, and fly-fishes for trout.