



**Pa. counties
preserve homes
of famous men**

Page F-5

OUTDOORS

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A mission to conserve and restore

(EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the debut column of "Bird Lore," which will be written for the Sun-Gazette's Outdoors section by members of the Lycoming Audubon Society.)

By **DAVID BROWN**
Special to the Sun-Gazette

The mission of the Lycoming Audubon Society is "to conserve and restore natural ecosystems, focusing on birds, other wildlife and their habitats for the benefit of humanity and the earth's biological diversity."

Education is an important part of the mission. With the ending of the environmental education programs at PPL's Montour Preserve at the end of last year, I was reminded of the impact those programs had on the local public's knowledge of nature. The first organized bird walk I ever attended was at the preserve and led to my deeper involvement in the birding community.

In addition to Lycoming Audubon's bird walks and public programs, this column is a tool for us to

(See A MISSION, Page F-4)

MORE COVERAGE:

Visit Audubon's Pa. homestead ▶ See F-5



PHOTO COURTESY OF DAVID BROWN

This common redpoll was photographed on Feb. 14 in Pennsdale.

Reflections in Nature: Long-lived sycamores

On our trip to Williamsburg, Virginia, a few weeks ago, we had dinner at Chownings Tavern, which dates back to the 1700s. After dinner and listening to the balladeer's music, we left and were walking back to our car when we came upon a ghostly looking tree.

Seeing a sycamore tree in either subdued light or fog as it drifts across the land is eerie. Since there was just enough light for us to see the tree but not enough to take a picture, we returned the next day to take photographs. Through the years, I often have called the sycamore a "ghost tree" and, on that evening, this sycamore tree appeared as one.

(See REFLECTIONS, Page F-3)



**BILL
BOWER**



PHOTO COURTESY OF BILL BOWER

Sycamores growing in cities often are pollarded, or heavily pruned, which results in deformities to the tree. The sycamore is extremely tolerant of drought conditions, resistant to salt and has the ability to survive in areas that have been macadamized.

'Full-on experience'

Wildlife Leadership Academy teaches students about natural environment

By **CARA MORNINGSTAR**
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When Kayley Dillon, of Bloomsburg, was 14, she attended the Wildlife Leadership Academy to become a wildlife ambassador. Between her freshman and sophomore years in high school last June, Dillon attended a camp on white-tailed deer studies. "They've got different camps with different species and different focuses. My camp focused on white-tail deer. That was my first choice, and I got into what I really wanted to do my first time through. You get to specify what interests you most," she said.

Since 2007, the Wildlife Leadership Academy has been giving students the opportunity to have hands-on experience with wildlife conservation.

The Academy is a cooperative initiative of various state agencies and conservation organizations. It is coordinated and administered by the Pennsylvania Institute for Conservation Education, a non-profit organization.

The Academy begins with an intensive, five-day residential field school that focuses on a fish or wildlife species as a springboard for exploring biology, habitat and conservation issues. Youth also develop leadership skills by engaging in team-building activities, educational presentations and mock "town hall" meetings on current topics.

The academy accepts youth ages 14-17 and adults. Adults will participate alongside the students but serve as mentors.

Applications are being accepted now. The deadline to apply is April 1.

The academy has four camps from which to choose — white-tailed deer, black bear, trout and ruffed grouse. This is the first year the academy will offer a black bear field school.

"Wildlife biologist Gary Alt, who coordinated the Pennsylvania Game Commission's black bear research and management program for over 25 years and who has also been involved with the Wildlife Leadership Academy summer program since its start in 2007, will be leading the instruction and development of the bear-focused field school," said a news release from the Academy.

"I would say the No. 1 thing is that this is a really good camp for any students that are interested in conservation, the outdoors and wildlife. It's going to give them a lot of specific knowledge about wildlife and conservation, but it will also teach basic life skills they can use while applying to colleges and going on in their future," said Katie Cassidy, program and outreach coordinator for the Wildlife Leadership Academy.

Students stay at the camp four days and five nights, all while learning about their specific species and how it fits into the environment.

"While teaching students about the species, they also broaden to talk about the environment, habitat, nutrition and everything there is to know about their species," Cassidy said.

The main focus is wildlife conservation. Students are introduced to specialists in the field to see job opportunities in wildlife and science fields, and they leave the camp with assignments to spread their knowledge to their community.

"Our mission for the Academy is to empower youth to become ambassadors for wildlife conservation. All the students that come from our camps go back to their communities as ambassadors and can share what they learn through outreach projects — like talking to their class, PowerPoint presentations, creek cleanup, things like that," Cassidy said.

Students also are taught how to speak up about environmental issues in their community.

"I knew I wanted to go into something with the environment but wasn't sure what. Going to camp



PHOTOS PROVIDED

From top: Students work with instructor Greg Hoover to search for macroinvertebrates in the stream at PA Brookies. Students learn about plants that are important to their focus species during a field session. Students participate in a teambuilding exercise that emphasizes the importance of each component of habitat — when one component leaves, the circle falls apart. Kayley Dillon, of Bloomsburg, works on her nature journal at the white-tailed deer field school. Dillon and her team, the Darling Does, pose for a photo in their official Wildlife Leadership Academy polo shirts.

really helped me focus what I wanted to do," Dillon said.

Her mother, Joanna, said Kayley has been working hard to educate others in her neighborhood.

"Kayley's been doing all different things with her outreach. She did a presentation at the middle school for students interested in wildlife biology. She told them also about the Academy for them to know the opportunity is out there," Joanna said.

(See APPLICATIONS, Page F-4)

(From Page F-1)

"They only accept 20 students into each of the individual camps. There's a lot of adults compared to the kids who are

For more information on the camp and how to apply, visit <http://picweb.org>; or contact Pennsylvania Institute for Conservation Education Director Michele Kittell at mkittell@picweb.org or 570-245-8518 or Program Coordinator Katie Cassidy at kcassidy@picweb.org or 570-939-5109; or go to facebook.com/wildlifeleadershipacademy.

"We got a lot of individual attention (from the adults). We even had an entire night where we sat around the campfire and asked questions, like how they

She said no time at the camp was wasted. Even on the first

“We’re not a hunting family (so) she had never been around

“Wildlife Leadership Academy has made me so much more confident in myself. Before field school, I hated being the center of attention and making presentations. Now I’m the first person to volunteer for everything,” Dillon said.

(From Page F-1)

Buffleheads, redheads and other diving ducks congregate in unfrozen stretches of the Susquehanna River. In March and April, skeins



This pine siskin was photographed on Feb. 14 in Pennsdale.

By May, the winter finches will have headed back north and the warblers will be back from Central and South America. Some species just will be passing through on their way to more northerly breeding grounds, but others will stay and breed. These next few months are some of the best for bird watching, and a perfect time to get started.

Observing birds is easy and can be done by anyone. The basic tools are a pair of binoculars and a field guide. Don't think that birds only can be seen in the early morning and in certain times of year. Birds are everywhere and can be seen at all times of day.

We need more eyes to count the common birds and find the rare ones. We need people to notice the decline of the golden-winged warbler and the arrival of the invasive Eurasian collared-dove. We hope you will join us in person on a bird walk or at least in spirit as we recount our bird lore.

David Brown is an avid local birder and photographer and is on the board of directors of the Lycoming Audubon Society. He may be reached at davidebrownpa@gmail.com.

The Lycoming Audubon Society is a chapter of the National Audubon Society with responsibility for members in Lycoming and Clinton counties. Information about the society and events can be found at <http://lycomingaudubon.blogspot.com>.

The public is invited to share local sightings and join discussions at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/IvcomingAudubon>

WELLSBORO — The Tiadaghton chapter of Trout Unlimited will hold a banquet featuring Dennis Charney, fly fishing guide and instructor, on March 28 at the Penn Wells Hotel dining room. Doors open at 4:30 p.m. and the buffet begins at 5:30. To reserve a seat, contact Lori Maloney at 570-724-1801 or lmaloney@tiogacountypa.us.

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By **JEANNE WAMBAUGH**
Special to the Sun-Gazette



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Visit the state Bureau of Forestry's Web page at www.dcnr.state.pa.us/forestry/stateforests/index.aspx and then pick a forest to learn about. Next, look at the tan tabs and click on Forest Management.

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