

of famous men

Page F-5 WILLIAMSPORT SUN-GAZETTE Sunday, February 22, 2015





Wildlife Leadership **Academy teaches** students about natural environment

By CARA MORNINGSTAR

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hen 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 teambuilding 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 dead-

line 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. Dillion 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

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)



A mission to conserve and restore

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 educa- MORE COVERAGE: tion programs at PPL's Montour Preserve at the Visit Audubon's Pa. end of last year, I was homestead ▶ See F-5 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



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)



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.

Applications sought for Wildlife Leadership Academy

(From Page F-1)

At a recent outdoor expo in Bloomsburg, Dillon talked to attendees about deer and shared information about the Academy.

"She presented about identifying the native tree species, a brochure and a PowerPoint, Joanna said. "She tagged over 20 trees at a park, and she learned tree identification at camp."

Even the process of getting accepted into the academy was a learning process for Kayley. Whereas most summer camps simply accept all applications, the academy is based on an acceptance process. Some of the activities can be intense and resources are limited, so organizers pick students who are serious about education.

"Each student will leave our camp with a completed tri-fold presentation on a topic of choice. They also talk with professionals in the field who are our instructors at the camp. They learn how to do a good radio interview, a good television interview, good presentations. We do mock town meetings to get skills on how to do that at their community," Cassidy said.

The academy's small, intimate environment focuses on

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

HOW TO APPLY:

The Wildlife Leadership Academy accepts youth ages 14-17 as well as adults, who serve as mentors but participate alongside students.

The deadline for applications is April 1.

Applicants may select one of four field schools. They, and their dates and locations, are: Pennsylvania Bucktails — focus on white-tailed

deer, June 16-20 at Stone Valley Recreation Area in **Huntingdon County**; Pennsylvania Brookies — focus on brook trout

and coldwater conservation focus, July 7-11 at Sieg Conference Center in Clinton County; Pennsylvania Drummers — focus on ruffed

grouse, July 21-25 at Powdermill Nature Reserve in Westmoreland County; and

 Pennsylvania Ursids — focus on black bear, Aug. 2-6 at Stone Valley Recreation Area in Huntingdon County.

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

there, so we felt very safe about it," Joanna said.

"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 got in the field and what they've done. We learned how they started and how they got their careers, and it helped us learn," Dillon said.

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

day, they jumped in headfirst to start learning about deer anato-

"We came in day one and they had a deer laid out for us. We got to see a dissection of the deer, so we got to see the different parts and how it worked. We jumped right in. It's a full-on experience from the start," Dillon said.

Taking advantage of all the time they had, typical days at the camp started early.

"We started early in the morning, generally up between 5 to 6 a.m. We had pretty much army marching around the cabins, personal chants to outdo the other teams. We had some journaling in the morning. The morning was more for the class time, sometimes a little activity for the day," Dillon said.

Classroom activities often were held in the morning so participants could learn about the projects they would undergo in the afternoon.

"There was some classroom time. You have to understand what you're talking about, but we got to spend time out in the field learning it as well to see how it's being used. We got to see how it affects the world, your life, career. Everything was applied," she said. One of her favorite activities

was going to a shooting range. She had never previously experienced hunting.

"We're not a hunting family (so) she had never been around

guns before," Joanna said.

"Turns out, I was really good at it," Dillon said, adding that she learned how important hunting can be to help manage deer populations.

"Hunting is part of population control. We learned what damage can be done when an area isn't well managed and how dangerous that can be. We really got to see how everything applies and how it works," she

Dillon said she loved the experience to do new things that she couldn't do in an ordinary classroom and also enjoyed meeting people from Pennsylvania who shared her interests.

"I'm still in contact with a lot of people I met at camp. I found people who could write recommendations for me for colleges in this same field," she said.

Overall, Dillon enjoyed her experience enough that she plans to apply to go again this summer.

"I am an outdoors person, but it's really for anyone who has an interest in the environment, our ecosystem, animals, or the outdoors," she said.

"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

A mission to conserve and restore

(From Page F-1)

share our passion for birds. Multiple writers will cover the topic of birds from different angles but, ultimately, we seek to get more people in our local area interested and informed about birds. About 250 species of

birds have been recorded in Lycoming County and over 200 of those are seen each year.

Late February is a great time to see our area's winter birds before they migrate. Readers with a bird feeder may have noticed a recent irruption of pine siskins, a northern species of finch that arrives in our area in large numbers some winters.

A lucky few also may see a common redpoll, another northern finch that is being seen in

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small numbers in the local area this winter.

Dark-

eyed juncos n a American tree sparrows hop along the ground beneath feeders, looking for fallen seed. A drive through local farmland will reveal flocks of horned larks and snow buntings in the fields and roughlegged hawks perched on

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

the smallest branches at



PHOTO COURTESY OF DAVID BROWN

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

of snow geese and tundra swans migrate north, while gulls and terns stop to rest at a thawing Rose Valley Lake.

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 passing through on their way to m o r e 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 goldenwinged 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 directors of the Lycoming AudubonSociety. He may be reached at davidebrown pa@gmail.com.

Lycoming TheAudubon 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. blog spot.com.

The public is invited to share local sightings and discussions https://www.facebook.com/ groups/lycomingAudubon.

OUTDOOR BRIEF

TU banquet to feature fly fishing guide

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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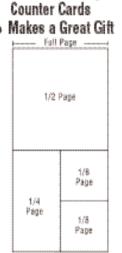
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Elk State Forest releases work plans

By JEANNE WAMBAUGH Special to the Sun-Gazette

EMPORIUM — The Elk State Forest, like the other state forests, always has had a plan to address its projects — such as stone placement on roads, trail rehabilitation projects, stream projects and timber sales — but now the public can see what is projected

for the year too. 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.

On this date

1980,

"Miracle on Ice" took

place in Lake Placid, New York, as the

United States Olympic hockey team upset the

In

Soviets, 4-3.



Click on 2015 Forest Management to see what projects the forest officials are working on this year.

If you see a project you would like to help with, become a volunteer and help out the state forest of your choice.

For more information, call the district office at 814-486-3353 or see the forest's Facebook page at www.facebook.com/ elkstateforest.

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