

Pennsylvania Naturalist

Connecting People, Nature and Community

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My home stands on a wooden bench, set back about two hundred feet from the north bank of the McKenzie River in western Oregon. Almost every day I go down to the river with no intention but to sit and watch. I have been watching the river for thirty years, just the three or four hundred yards of it I can see from the forested bank, a run of clear, quick water about 350 feet wide. If I have learned anything here, it's that each time I come down, something I don't know yet will reveal itself.

If it's a man's intent to spend thirty years staring at a river's environs in order to arrive at an explanation of the river, he should find some other way to spend his time. To assert this, that a river can't be known, does not to my way of thinking denigrate science, any more than saying a brown bear can't be completely known. The reason this is true is because the river is not a thing, in the way a Saturn V rocket engine is a thing. It is an

expression of biological life, in dynamic relation to everything around it—the salmon within, the violet-green swallow swooping its surface, alder twigs floating its current, a mountain lion sipping its bank water, the configurations of basalt that break its flow and give it timbre and tone.

In my experience with field biologists, those fresh to a task—say, caracara research—are the ones most likely to give themselves a deadline—ten years, say—against which they will challenge themselves to know all there is to know about that falcon. It never works. More seasoned field biologists, not as driven by a need to prove themselves, are content to concentrate on smaller arenas of knowledge. Instead of speaking definitively of coyote, armadillo, or wigeon, they tend to say, "This one animal, that one time, did this in that place." It's the approach to nature many hunting and gathering peoples take, to this day. The view suggests a horizon rather than a boundary for knowing, toward which we

are always walking. A great shift in the Western naturalist's frame of mind over the past fifty years, it seems to me, has been the growth of this awareness: to get anywhere deep with a species, you must immerse yourself in its milieu. You must study its ecology. If you wish to understand the caracara, you need to know a great deal about exactly where the caracara lives when; and what the caracara's relationships are with each of the many components of that place, including its weathers, its elevations, its seasonal light.

A modern naturalist, then, is no longer someone who goes no further than a stamp collector, mastering nomenclature and field marks. She or he knows a local flora and fauna as pieces of an inscrutable mystery, increasingly deep, a unity of organisms Western culture has been trying to elevate itself above since at least Mesopotamian times. The modern naturalist, in fact, has now become a kind of emissary in this, working to reestablish good relations with all the biological components humanity has excluded from its moral universe.

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Permission to reprint a portion of *The Naturalist*, by Barry Lopez was granted by the author. Click [HERE](#) for a link to the complete essay.

Nature Artists, Writers and Poets

Call for Submissions to *PA Naturalist*

We invite nature artists and writers from across the Commonwealth to submit their work for inclusion in future issues of *Pennsylvania Naturalist*.

At the Institute, we aim to inspire people to discover, enjoy, appreciate and protect the wildlife, fields, rivers, lakeshores, forests and wild landscapes of Pennsylvania ecosystems. We recognize that there are many different ways to connect with the natural world and we want to cover the spectrum, from science to art.

Pennsylvania Naturalist unites these various approaches for engaging with our environment to further ignite our passion and expand our knowledge as naturalists. In each issue we feature a Pennsylvania nature artist, include natural history essays and poetry, summarize current scientific research that is relevant to naturalists, include field notes on great locations for outdoor exploration across the state, and more.

If you are inspired by the natural world to create works of art, we encourage you to inspire others with your work and make a submission to *Pennsylvania Naturalist*.

Submission Guidelines

Featured Artist:

Includes painting, photography, sketching. Submit 4-5 pieces of your work as medium resolution (<1mg) jpeg or gif files. Prefer email submissions. Prefer pieces that complement, in terms of natural history, the season of the issues' publication (fall/winter or spring/summer). Please include a brief bio with your submission.

Essays:

Accepted essays will cover general natural history and natural science topics. 500 word maximum. Submit essay in MS Word (1997-2003 version) as an email attachment.

Poetry:

Submit 1-3 poems in a single MS Word document (1997-2003 version) as an email attachment.

Submission Deadlines:

Spring/Summer issue: December 1

Fall/Winter issue: May 1



All submissions: please include your full name, county of residence and contact information.

You will receive an email confirmation on receipt of your submitted work. If you do not receive an email confirmation, you should assume that it has not been received by the editor.

NOTE: Because *Pennsylvania Naturalist* is not subscription-based and is free to anyone who is interested, we cannot pay for work that is accepted for inclusion. However, featured artists and writers will have their work viewed by a growing readership (currently over 900 people across the state).

Send submissions to:

Gail Farmer, *PA Naturalist* Editor

PICE Field Office

3387 Route 737

Kempton, PA 19529

gfarmer@piceweb.org (email preferred)



PICE is on Facebook

Follow PICE on Facebook to stay current on PICE program news and to keep connected with fellow Pennsylvania naturalists. We will also be posting links to nature related news, science, literature and art.

Click the Facebook icon above to find our page and become a fan or search for us by name.

PICE Program News



Ferns and Mosses

[Register Now!](#)

SEPTEMBER 12, 2009 (SAT), Ricketts Glen State Park, *Susan Munch, Ph.D.*

The forests of Pennsylvania provide ideal habitat for luxuriant growth of ferns and mosses as well as other nonflowering plants. Investigate the habitats and uniqueness of these fascinating plants as we explore old forests, wetlands and Appalachian landscapes. Learn to identify major common genera and species from an experienced botanist. For our field studies, we will explore the most beautiful and alluring Pennsylvania natural area where nonflowering plants thrive. Ricketts Glen is known for its abundance of scenic waterfalls.



Exploring Landscape through Photography

[Register Now!](#)

OCTOBER 24 - 25 (Sat - Sun); Pennsylvania Grand Canyon and Pine Creek Valley

Scott Brown

The landscape of North Central Pennsylvania showcases the splendor of the Appalachians and its fall beauty. Beautiful natural surroundings abound and provide photographic opportunities. Scott Brown, author of *Pennsylvania Waterfalls* and *Pennsylvania Mountain Vistas*, will guide all levels of photographic experience towards an end product of extraordinary visual satisfaction. Imagine returning home with a collection of stunning landscape photographs which can be shown as hanging portraits, shared e-mail images, and greeting cards.



The Wildlife Leadership Academy (WLA),

Our wildlife ecology and management leadership program for high school students will be running a new field school in the summer of 2010. In addition to the annual white-tailed deer school, we will be adding a field school focusing on Pennsylvania's state bird — the ruffed grouse. Each WLA field school focuses on single species as a springboard for exploring ecological concepts and management issues.

Pennsylvania Drummers (grouse) will be held June 22-26, 2010

Pennsylvania Bucktails (deer) will be held July 7-11, 2010



JOIN US FOR
A SPECIAL FUNDRAISING EVENT

In The Shadow of The Mountain of God, lecture by Jim Brett

October 22, 2009

Kutztown University

6:30pm Wine and Cheese Reception

7:30pm Lecture

A deep exploration into the exquisite culture of the peoples of East Africa. Oldoinyo Lengai, an active volcano in the Great African Rift, is the sacred mountain of the Maasai and overlooks the most important ancestral grounds of our ancestors. Jim will explore primitive African peoples still carrying out their ways of life in today's world of technology and strife. He will take you to some of the most beautiful parts of our planet far removed from the normal tourist venues.

[REGISTRATION DETAILS](#)

www.PICEweb.org

Featured Artist: *LaVerne Hill*

Nature and wildlife have captivated Ms. Hill's imagination and inspired her art since she was a young girl growing up in Pennsylvania. She specializes in miniature paintings and has shown her work at shows and exhibits all over the country, winning numerous awards.

Ms. Hill is passionate about the wildlife she paints and is an ardent conservationist.

All of the artwork in this issue of *PA Naturalist* is by LaVerne Hill.

To see more of Ms. Hill's enchanting work, visit her webpage:

www.natureartists.com/laverne_hill.asp

Contact Ms. Hill: hill1@comcast.net



Science News for Naturalists

A summary of relevant research on wildlife and ecology.

Wood frogs can speed the rate of egg hatching in the presence of an egg predator.

Geoffrey Smith and Duran Fortune tested whether the detectable presence of an egg predator, the mosquito fish, would affect the timing of hatching, hatching success, and hatchling size in wood frogs. Based on their laboratory experiments, it seems that wood frogs can accelerate the timing of

their egg hatching if they detect, chemically and/or visually, the presence of an egg predator. Accelerated hatching did not affect hatching success or hatchling size. Accelerated hatching would presumably reduce the risk of egg predation by shortening the exposure period of eggs to egg predators.

Smith, G.R. and D.T. Fortune. 2009. Hatching plasticity of wood frog (*Rana sylvatica*) eggs in response to mosquitofish (*Gambusia affinis*) cues. *Herpetological Conservation and Biology* 4(1):43-47.

What everyone needs to know about evolution.

Finally—a book that fully explains the concept of evolution and lays out the supporting evidence for the non-scientist. [Why Evolution is True](#) will get you up to speed on the glut of evidence in support of biological evolution that has amassed over the past 30 years. Dr. Jerry Coyne does an excellent job avoiding jargon and writing a

book that is intellectually accessible to most people. If you have a basic understanding of the role of DNA in heredity, then you should have no trouble. This book is a must read for the naturalist interested in getting up to speed on current evidence supporting biological evolution and, more importantly, deepening and broadening their interpretations of what they witness in nature.

[Why Evolution is True](#) by Jerry A. Coyne. Oxford University Press, 2009. (336 pages).

The common Chick-a-dee calls of Carolina Chickadees convey more information than you might think.

We've all heard it thousands of times, the lovely *chick-a-dee* calls of the sociable Chickadee. What we may not have realized was just how much a Chickadee can say when singing *chick-a-dee-dee-dee*. Dr. Tom Freeburg of the University of Tennessee



parsed meaning from this call through field and laboratory experiments. He discovered that the Carolina Chickadee song notes and call types changed depending on the bird's environmental context and behavior. The birds used particular notes and calls to indicate proximity to the ground, flight behavior, and the presence of a predator. Chickadees can combine these particular notes and calls to send relatively complex messages to members of their social group.

Freeburg, T.M. 2008. Complexity in the *chick-a-dee* call of the Carolina Chickadees (*Parus carolinensis*): Associations of context and signaler behavior to call structure. *The Auk*:125(4):896-907.

—Gail Farmer

PICE loves....

ORION
MAGAZINE

Orion Magazine is an influential forum for re-imagining humanity's relationship to nature, culture, and place, featuring America's foremost writers and artists.

PICE is a member of *The Orion Society* and we encourage you to check them out.

Spotlight on State Parks: Staff Pick

R.B Winter State Park — Michele Kittell, PICE Program Coordinator

Part of the Ridge and Valley area of Central PA, located in Union County on PA 192, 18 miles west of Lewisburg

I enjoy R.B. Winter State Park's diversity of options for the outdoors person. In the warmer months, not only is there a cool spring-fed lake, named Halfway Lake, open to swimming and fishing, but there are also a variety of hiking and mountain biking trails to enjoy. In the winter, the same lake is open to ice fishing with the hiking trails turning into beautiful cross-country skiing paths. The park also hosts an annual Snowfest that includes more winter recreation activities such as snowshoeing and ice skating.

Recently, I hiked the Boiling Spring Trail which was originally created by the Civilian Conservation Corps. At one point on the trail you can see water "boiling" out of the

ground in the form of freshwater springs that then turn into small streams. I also made the short, steep hike up the Overlook Trail where at the top you get a view overlooking the park from 300 feet above. While at the top of the overlook, I was warned of a bear sighting just down the road – he was probably enjoying the ripe wild blueberries I saw along the trails!

Many of the trails at R.B. Winter connect to trails in Bald Eagle State Forest making it an excellent location to start overnight backpacking trips. If you're in central PA, R.B. Winter is a great place to visit any time of the year.

— Michele Kittell

Naturalist Rambles

Marcia Bonta has written nine books and over 300 magazine articles on nature and natural history topics. Born and raised in the forested town of Woodbury, NJ, Marcia was enchanted with nature from an early age. She studied history and English at Bucknell University, where she met her husband, Bruce. Much of Marcia's inspiration has come from the isolated, forested mountaintop farm near Tyrone, Pennsylvania where she has lived since 1971, and where she and Bruce raised their three sons.

What experiences first influenced you to become a naturalist?

Going out with my father when I was young in the woods near Pottstown. That was where my father was raised, and he took me to visit many great natural places. Also, we lived near an oak forest in New Jersey. We lived in a development, but just outside of it was a very large woods and a series of lakes. I was very lucky. That whole area has now been built into developments, but at that time I had a large area to hike and roam around in.

Where do you go to connect with nature and find inspiration for your writing?

Right outside my back door. I walk on our trails every day.

What do you enjoy most about living in your "mountain hollow"?

The opportunity to be a part of nature every day, without having to drive a car. I can just use my own two feet. It's marvelous to be able to make as many wildlife observations as I have since I've lived here. It's strange -- since we moved here, we've seen more diversity of wildlife, but less diversity of plants. With the woolly adelgid, we're losing our hemlocks, and we've also got every invasive plant species you can think of, but we now have fishers, bears and coyotes, which we never had when we first came here.

What is your favorite thing about Pennsylvania?

In comparison with other places, it's practically bug free! We lived in Maine, and I loved it, but you have to deal with the black flies. When we first came here I told my kids "we're moving to a bug-free paradise!"

Obviously, there are other things I love about Pennsylvania, such as the beauty of the green mountaintops, but as you know there are many wind farms going up there now. Rickett's Glen State Park is my favorite place in Pennsylvania. I love that place. I went up to the prized parks in New York and other places that everyone knows about, and I always wondered why Rickett's Glen is not more known elsewhere. That's our treasure as far as I'm concerned.

What is the best thing anyone ever taught you?

My high school wasn't much, but I went to Bucknell University and it opened up new worlds for me. I was a history and English major, and I had a great professor who took me aside and helped me learn to write. All of my professors were very encouraging. The first thing that I wrote was an article in Bucknell's alumni magazine called "Bucknell Changed My Life." When I originally looked at colleges, my father took me to Penn State, but it was way too big for me. When we visited Bucknell, I saw the view of the beautiful rolling mountains and I didn't look any further. What I learned there about writing and research were the best things anyone ever taught me.

Who do you think is the best nature writer?

Edwin Way Teale is the writer who most inspired me. Also, Hal Borland. I love the old-fashioned nature writers who provided more information about nature, with less focus on their private lives. As for modern writers, I really like Janet Lembke. She's a North Carolina writer, and she provides a lot of great information in her writing.

What book has influenced you most?

I have two rooms full of nature books. I must have hundreds, even thousands. I would have to include all of the seasons books by Teale, and the Appalachian Forests books by Chris Bolgiano. She's a great writer and has been very much overlooked by reviewers and critics. I had read her articles, and I liked that she was writing about the Appalachians when everyone else was concerned with the old-growth forests of the west. I was just happy to find someone writing about the eastern forests, which really need help, especially with



Marcia Bonta with Golden Eagle

mountaintop removal happening. The Appalachians have a wonderful forest system and it is being systematically destroyed.

What principle do you strive to live by?

To try to live as lightly as we can on the Earth, and to try to conserve. For example, we drive as little as possible. To build our caretaker's house we spent much more money than we had to in order to use geothermal heating, passive solar, and other means of minimizing its impact. We try to eat locally as much as possible. Basically, we try not to consume a lot because we are very aware of the dwindling resources of our Earth. I want our children and grandchildren to look back and say "Well, they tried their best to live lightly on the earth." We've been given what I feel is an incredible gift--the gift of a verdant earth--and we must take better care of it.

—Emily Brodsky

Support Our Work

OUR MISSION AND PURPOSE

The Institute is dedicated to stimulating knowledge of, interest in, and an appreciation of natural history by providing extraordinary field-based educational opportunities in Pennsylvania and beyond.

We are committed to creating a more ecologically literate population; one that becomes increasingly engaged in the conservation of natural resources.

Your support makes our programs possible. Please let us hear from you today and we will put your contribution to work.

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For the Mountain that Sustains Us

We wait on dreams here, I think
Like it is our temple
Where trees with enduring character
grab hold. With disregard.
Tangled totems
giving wind form
rock shelter
and my mind sanctuary.
We wait on dreams here, I think.

—Jeremy Scheivert
Orwigsburg, PA

Isle of Jura

The hind carcass.
Lay
oddly mummified.
Patches
of fur.
Dry skin stretched taut.
Cervical tendons
dried tight.
Neck in death's bow.
Just above high tide.
Sheep dung all about.

— Christopher Farmer
Kempton, PA



As Tea Steeps

the fawn lowers
his head and munches
the remaining tulip
in the lawn. When
he turns away he steps
into the blank face
of a red blanket hanging
on a line, drawing it upward
above long grass.
But as quickly as this
alteration occurs
he pushes pass
his damp concealment,
revealing himself
again, returning
to the woods.

— John Ebersole
Montgomery County