

Pennsylvania Forest Stewards News



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Chair's Column: Support Structures

By Nancy Baker, PA Forest Stewards '00,
Steering Committee Chair

A little over 15 years ago, I drove down to Reading to attend a Pennsylvania Forest Stewards in-service linked to the annual PA Forest Stewards fall training. Before I left home, I tossed into the back of the truck a northern red oak “seedling” about 20 inches high and a good one inch in diameter that I had cut from a south-facing slope on my land. It and its numerous siblings of similar height were growing under a canopy dominated by white ash—and the ash were definitely “lookin’ poorly” with thinning crowns and epicormic branching along the boles, although four foresters working with chainsaws and machetes couldn’t find any evidence of emerald ash borer (EAB) larval galleries. Ash wilt was the ultimate verdict, but we all knew that EAB was coming and that the next forest was not up in the canopy, but down on the forest floor.

Jim Finley looked a bit quizzical when I walked in with that short quirky little tree at the training; when I pulled out a hand lens, he smiled, sat down, and counted...18 rings. The novice class was in total disbelief! Yes, indeed! A prime demonstration of what more-than-enough white-tailed deer can do. And it elicited from the class just the kind of discussion that Jim loved: What do we do now?

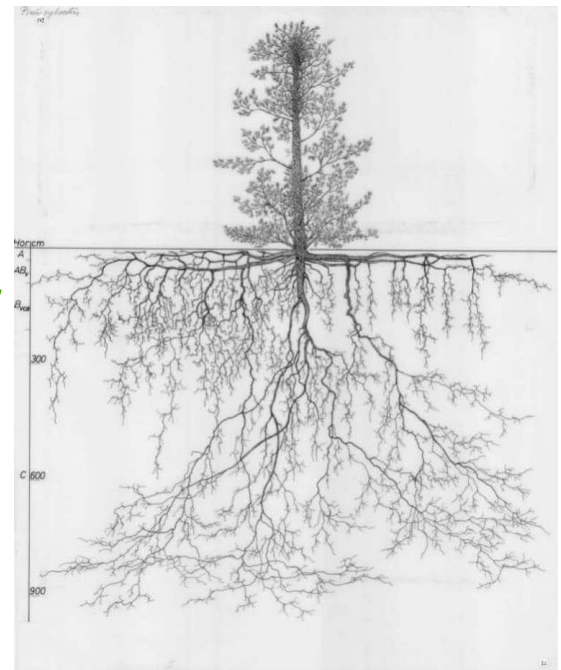
Cut to the chase. On our land, with Jim’s encouragement, we cut off 600 of those stunted oaks the next fall—right at ground level. We protected them with five-foot welded wire cages and white oak stakes (let me tell you, it felt very strange to put big cages on nothing!), and waited...

Oaks have a strategy that acknowledges fire. They bury their resources underground where you can’t see them. Oaks put their initial resources into their root systems. They

also resprout from a root collar that is buried under the surface of the ground, not above it as in maple, basswood, or birch which are more susceptible to fire. And after a winter of anxious waiting on our part, those hidden oaks shot out of the ground, absolutely straight and determined, powered by nearly two decades of underground root support system development. Nearly all were

Chair's Column, continued on page 5

This drawing of the support system for a Scot's pine is from the fascinating Wageningen University & Research, Netherlands website: <https://images.wur.nl/digital/collection/coll13/id/1268/>; it's from "Wurzelatlas mitteleuropäischer Waldbäume und Sträucher" by Lore Kutschera & Erwin Lichtenegger (2002).



Thank You, PA Forest Stewards

As you read through this issue, you’ll read about ways you can support the work of the Finley Center, the upcoming Forest Landowners Conference (it will be here before we know it!), contributions (and some amazing photos) by and about fellow PA Forest Stewards, and more.

During this holiday season, we want to take a moment to tell you how grateful we are for each one of you and

your commitment to this program and to the stewardship of Penn’s Woods.

Thank you for being a part of this growing community and for sharing your time, treasure, and talents in so many ways. As we enter the 35th year of the PA Forest Stewards program, we celebrate you, the over 500 active volunteers who continue to inspire Pennsylvania’s 700,000 forest landowners to care well for their woods.



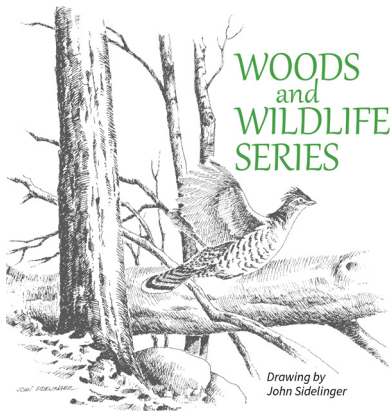
THE JAMES C. FINLEY
CENTER FOR PRIVATE FORESTS



PennState
College of Agricultural Sciences

Treekeepers of Mountain Meadows: Part 1

Article and Photos by Laura and Mike Jackson, PA Forest Stewards, Class of '00



This article is part of a series exploring forests, their trees, and the animals that inhabit them. Each article blends personal experiences with factual information and will inspire you to look closely in your woodlot for evidence that you are a habitat provider for wildlife species.

Is there a favorite native tree or shrub that you'd like to grow in your yard or woods? Each spring and fall, the Keystone 10 Million Tree project gives away free, potted, native tree and shrub seedlings, tree tubes, and stakes (a \$27 value per tree) to Pennsylvania residents. This coming year, 2025, will be the last year for the program, so if you'd like to request free native tree and shrub seedlings, connect with a local partner to start filling those empty spaces in your yard or forest. You can read more about this wonderful "tree for all" program and locate a partner organization near you at tenmilliontrees.org.

When we built our house at the top of a mountain field on the lower flank

of Tussey Mountain in Bedford County, we positioned it so we'd be able to keep most of the nearby trees. To our east were a beautiful sugar maple and white-flowering dogwood, to the south was an ancient apple tree, while a pear tree, sugar maples, shagbark hickory, and large white ash trees filled our backyard. The black walnut to the north was a leaner, but far enough away so it didn't pose a threat if it fell.

We built our house just in front of the remains of a house that Laura's ancestors built in the early 1800s—all that was left were a few bricks, broken pottery and window glass, a large horseshoe, a porcelain head of a doll, old coins and buttons. We thought the pear tree and apple tree might have been planted in the 1800s, so we didn't want to destroy that history, even though the original house was gone.

We planted a few crabapple trees and some hybrid elm (non-invasive and resistant to Dutch elm disease) behind the house, as well as three Eastern redbud trees very near our house—one on the west and two on the south side since they are smaller trees and would help shade the house in the summer.

Because we had so many white ash trees that shaded most of our backyard, we planted a few pawpaws to fill in the understory. Laura had discovered a wild grove of pawpaws nearby many years ago, so we thought it would be neat to incorporate this species into our backyard forest. We planted both hybrids and straight species. Pawpaw trees are unusual for many reasons, including the fact that young trees need shade, but

more light is needed to flower and bear fruit.

We didn't plant many other trees around the house, but when the emerald ash borer killed all the ash in 2014, our shady landscape was gone. The first summer rainstorm was a shock. Since over 20 large ash trees died and were removed from our backyard, we suddenly had runoff and erosion problems. The pawpaws really benefitted from the extra sunlight, though, and took off like crazy, finally producing fruit.

We have spent the last 11 years filling in the sunny gaps in our backyard with 12 native tree species and eight different species of native shrubs, not only to control runoff, but to provide more biodiversity. We also dug a vernal pool in the wettest area, which somehow induced native willows to grow along the edge of the pool. Who would have thought?

Unfortunately, the towering sugar maple in the front of our house couldn't cope with the change in water flow, so it died about five years after our house was built—sugar maples don't like wet feet, much to our dismay. We decided to replace it with a tree to memorialize a truly spectacular tree that we saw when we backpacked in Honduras in July 1993. We were deep into the hot and humid rainforest in the remote mountainous Sierra de Agalta National Park, when we saw a group of absolutely huge trees to our left, fairly close to the trail. Not only were the trees amazingly massive, but they had strange scars on their trunks that appeared to be anthropogenic.

We left the trail and carefully picked our way closer to the trees, marveling at their size. Our friend, Mark Bonta, who led the backpacking trip, told us that the trees were tapped for their resin, called storax. We were shocked, since we knew this tree in Pennsylvania as a small to medium street tree, planted in parks and along sidewalks in towns, which residents complained about because it was so "dirty" when the spiny balls fall on the yard.

But here, in the tropical forest of Honduras, it was truly a majestic tree. We suddenly had a new appreciation for American sweetgum trees, which live

The white-flowering dogwood growing in our front yard glowed orange as December's early morning sun touched its ice-covered branches.



Treekeepers, continued on page 3

as long as 400 years. The scientific name for sweetgum is a lyrical phrase: *Liquidambar styraciflua*, while Hondurans call the tree liquidambar. We learned that the sticky sap that drips out of wounds in the trunk looks like a liquid amber, hence the Latin genus name and Honduran common name. The oozing sap is called storax and used in the perfume industry, while the wood is one of the most important hardwood products in the southeastern United States, where sweetgum is an important tree in southern forests.

Sweetgum storax, bark, and leaves have an amazing number of medicinal uses. According to a research review article in the National Library of Medicine¹, knowledge of the medicinal properties of sweetgum dates back to the Aztec Empire, some 10,000 years ago. The ancient Aztecs used storax to treat skin infections and other ailments. Native Americans also used storax for medicinal purposes, as well as burning the sap for incense or mixing it with tobacco leaves as a sedative. Leaf oil from American sweetgum leaves contains the same active ingredient as the Australian tea tree, which is used as an antimicrobial agent. We use tea tree



Our sweetgum when it was about 25 years old, in 2018. The fall foliage rivals that of the sugar maple that used to grow in the same spot.

oil to treat cuts and scratches. Sweetgum leaves also contain shikimic acid in their leaves, which is the precursor of the key ingredient in the antiviral drug Tamiflu[®] used to treat the H1N1 influenza in 2009 and 2010. It's amazing how many more medicinal properties are described in the article.

European settlers found other uses for the sweetgum. In Appalachia, people mixed sweetgum resin with whiskey and chewed it to clean their teeth—which might have additional benefits depending on how much whiskey is added!²



Most male and female raptors have the same markings, but it's easy to tell the female from the male since she is so much larger. They make a good team, watching in different directions for squirrels, rodents, and rabbits. During mating season, from late March to early May, they sometimes sit shoulder-to-shoulder on the same branch!

Unfortunately, we no longer know much about natural herbal remedies—we tend to associate trees with wildlife instead of medicinal properties. A special wildlife tree grows in a tree row below the third mountain field, so we can see it very easily from our house. It's an emergent extending above the canopy, making it a favorite perch for birds—especially a pair of Red-tailed Hawks that we often see.

We've seen a Bald Eagle, Black Vultures, Turkey Vultures, American Crows, Ravens, Cooper's Hawks, and other birds land in the tree, but the biggest surprise was a Great Blue Heron that perched in the tree early one morning.



The sunrise turned the sky yellow to form a perfect backdrop for the silhouette of a Great Blue Heron that landed in the tree one spring morning.

Sadly, the tree, a black locust, lost its top during a windstorm last year and no longer provides a perfect perch for birds.

In Part 2, we'll share more experiences with trees and wildlife in our yard.



One tree that's no longer in our yard is a Callery pear that we planted in 2005. Fortunately, when we found out it is invasive, Mike pulled it out before it could sucker or spread any seeds.

References:

¹ Lingbeck, Jody; O'Bryan, Corliss, et.al. 2015. Sweetgum: An ancient source of beneficial compounds with modern benefits. *Pharmacogn Rev.*, 9(17):1-11.

² <https://ufi.ca.uky.edu/treetalk/ecobot-sweetgum>.

Registration Opens First Week of December!

6th Biennial Forest Landowners Conference

The Finley Center and our partners invite you to join us for the 6th Biennial Forest Landowners Conference on Friday and Saturday, March 7 and 8, 2025 at the Penn Stater Hotel and Conference Center in State College, PA.

Friday's conference registration (\$99; \$85 if you register by January 15) includes a carefully crafted lineup of six concurrent learning sessions with up to 11 presentations during each, lunch with keynote speaker Ethan Tapper, access to dozens of exhibitors in the Exhibit Hall, and refreshment breaks. You can wrap up the day by making plans to attend the evening dinner with renowned ecologist Nalini Nadkarni (\$35 additional). For those interested in going deeper in their learning, Saturday morning offers a wide selection of extended learning workshops and field tours to round out your experience (\$35). Unlike in previous years, there will be no additional presentations on Saturday.

For the many PA Forest Stewards who have attended our past conferences, you can see we've made some changes to our conference schedule. We've teamed

up with Penn State Extension to bring the Forest Health Briefing and Forest Landowners Conference back-to-back for those who want to attend both events. Also, we have streamlined the conference schedule to maximize cost effectiveness and to provide more options for attendees.

You can find information about each event and register for the full lineup of events or select "à la carte" the activities you wish to attend at ecosystems.psu.edu/forest-conference.

Registration opens the first week of December. Invite fellow landowners to join you!

Join in the PA Forest Stewards Dessert Gathering!

Attention all PA Forest Stewards attending the Conference: You and your guests are invited to join us in the first floor conference area of the Penn Stater on Thursday, March 6, 7:30 – 9:00 p.m. for dessert, a brief update, and conversation with fellow Stewards. Please RSVP to PrivateForests@psu.edu or 814-863-0401 with your name and number attending.

Forest Health, Insect, and Disease Briefing: March 6

On March 6, the day before the Forest Landowners Conference kicks off, Penn State Extension, the PA DCNR Bureau of Forestry, and partners invite you to join in the 2025 Forest Health Briefing at the Penn Stater Hotel and Conference Center's President's Hall.

Geared toward forestry and natural resources professionals and interested forest landowners and members of the public, presenters will share valuable updates concerning current forest health practices and threats facing Pennsylvania's forests.

The Briefing will open with an instructional session on commonly used pesticides in forestry that includes core credit for pesticide applicators, followed by five presentations on the status of Pennsylvania's forest insect and disease issues, as well as other important forest health updates and information. Lunch and refreshment breaks are provided. Registration fee: \$90 (register for the Briefing at the same site as the conference).

3 DAYS. 2 EVENTS. 1 VENUE.

What You Can Register for at the Registration Site

Thursday, March 6: Forest Health, Insect, and Disease Briefing: Registration Fee: \$90

Friday, March 7: Forest Landowners Conference: Registration Fee: \$99 (Early Bird Special through January 15: \$85) Evening Dinner with Nalini Nadkarni: \$35 additional

Saturday, March 8: Forest Landowners Conference: Conference Tours and Workshops: Registration Fee: \$35

FOREST HEALTH BRIEFING REGISTRATION INCLUDES:

Thursday 8:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.: Briefing Activities
Thursday 3:30 – 5:30 p.m.: Pre-Conference Reception

FOREST LANDOWNERS CONFERENCE REGISTRATION INCLUDES:

Thursday 3:30 – 5:30 p.m.: Pre-Conference Reception
Friday 8:00 a.m. – 5:15 p.m.:

- Six Learning Sessions with up to 11 topics to choose from for each session
- Lunch with Keynote Speaker Ethan Tapper
- Opportunities to Network with service providers and their resources in the Exhibit Hall
- Refreshment Breaks

FOREST LANDOWNERS CONFERENCE TOURS AND WORKSHOPS REGISTRATION INCLUDES:

Saturday 8:30 – 11:30 a.m.:

- Nine tours and workshops to choose from (choose one)
- Transportation to/from tour sites included

FOREST LANDOWNERS CONFERENCE OPTIONAL ACTIVITY:

Friday Dinner with Nalini Nadkarni, 7:00 p.m.: \$35 additional

TO REGISTER ONLINE, GO TO ecosystems.psu.edu/forest-conference or scan QR code.



End-of-Year Giving: Supporting the Work of the Finley Center

As you read in Nancy's column, the Finley Center is participating in Penn State's GivingTuesday campaign. Our site is live and accepting donations through midnight on GivingTuesday, December 3. Follow our social media (@finleyprivateforests on Facebook and Instagram) for updates on our quest to exceed last year's number of donors.

In addition to Nancy's challenge gift, we have another offer via an anonymous donor to match every 25 donors with an additional \$350. Between Nancy and our anonymous donor, every 25 donors to our campaign gives us an extra \$1,350! That's

GIVING TUESDAY

tremendous! Help us make it happen—spread the word about the Finley Center and ways to support it through your networks!

We have been so fortunate to have the Finley Center endowment, to not only conduct applied research on private woodlands and with forest landowners,

but also to ensure engagement of our student communities and to support our PA Forest Stewards volunteer program when federal funding has lagged. We've been able to turn to it time and again to fill gaps and ensure we can continue to offer a high caliber program.

For those interested in supporting the Finley Center financially outside of GivingTuesday, the Center has a well-established endowment and gratefully accepts financial contributions. You can visit the Center's donation website at raise.psu.edu/FinleyCenterNews. We thank you for your support.

Chair's Column, continued from page 1

single stems, so they didn't require pruning. At two years, we checked that they didn't wander out through the cage openings and re-centered errant ones with padded flexible wire. They grew like weeds.

Today, Jim would be as pleased as I am to see them straight and tall; I wish he could see them pushing right into the canopy! He knew that there was a terrific support system hidden from sight.

All this is to say that hidden support systems can be extremely important! And that there is a hidden support

system that we all know about but should acknowledge more often—the James C. Finley Center for Private Forests—that undergirds (among many other things) our PA Forest Stewards volunteer program, that directs research investigating the relationships between landowners and their forests, that fosters a new generation of thoughtful forest professionals to help us care for Penn's Woods.

I have met, over the past few weeks, a number of forestry students from Penn State, from Mont Alto, and from other

natural resources programs across the Commonwealth. There are some very sharp and well-prepared young men and women among them. You likely don't know them—they are hidden from you like the root systems of oaks—but there's spectacular potential among them. And, they are likely to be the individuals who influence your forest after you and I follow all that white ash into the vast beyond.

So...GivingTuesday is coming up at the beginning of December and here's my idea: Four thousand dollars would finance a summer internship within the Finley Center for Private Forests for one of those students. Think of what that might mean for the future of that student AND for your/our forest!

Here's the deal: I don't care if you donate five dollars or a million dollars, I'm going to match every 25 gifts with \$1000. If you can give that \$5.00, many thanks! If you can persuade someone else to give \$5.00, that will count even more! It's easy to do; just go to give.psu.edu/givingtuesday-2024 and type Finley Center in the search box. (And if, per chance, you miss the deadline for GivingTuesday, I'll still count each gift to the James C. Finley Center for Private Forests until the end of the year. You can make an end-of-year gift at raise.psu.edu/FinleyCenterNews).

Please, Let's Make This Happen! Let's make every effort to grow this great underground support system for our woods!

Nancy

Talk to me at bakerii@epix.net.



The generous support of the Finley Center's many donors has allowed us to provide opportunities for students to gain valuable hands-on experience engaging with Pennsylvania's forest landowners.



Laura and Mike Jackson Receive the 2024 Sandy Cochran Award

By Nancy Baker, PA Forest Steward and Steering Committee Chair, Class of '00

Pennsylvania Forest Stewards Laura and Mike Jackson of Bedford County, PA, were awarded the 2024 Sandy Cochran Award for Excellence in Natural Resource Education at the Pennsylvania Forestry Association's Annual Meeting in State College on November 16.

Laura and Mike are retired science schoolteachers, forest landowners, and stewards of 120 acres located on the lower slope of Tussey Mountain. In 1985, Laura's parents gifted them the land. The property was part of the family's 700-acre dairy farm, with a family history dating back to 1811.

The Jacksons knew the history of the land. Little attention had been paid to the woodland; it had been high-graded several times and invasive plants were beginning to overtake it. But they also knew the land could be so much more with a little care. In 2000, they attended PA Forest Stewards training. The stewardship training gave them woodland management knowledge and tools, but it also changed how they perceived their woods.

The Jacksons are well-known in the field of Environmental Science Education in Bedford County. Mike initiated the Envirothon program in the Everett Area School District and Laura did the same in the Bedford Area School District. As retired science teachers, it was second nature for them to use their stewardship training knowledge and hands-on experience of managing their own forest to share that information with others.

Laura and Mike have excellent communication and photography skills, and both are avid birders and wildlife enthusiasts. They use their teaching backgrounds and acquired skills to engage and share the importance of forest stewardship with many audiences.

For more than 30 years, the Jacksons have hosted educational tours and workshops on their property, an excellent way to highlight and share their stewardship efforts while demonstrating to other forest/woodland owners the importance of forest management. They've collaborated with the PA DCNR Bureau of Forestry, NRCS, Western PA Conservancy, PA Game Commission, Penn State Extension, Indiana University of PA, area conservation groups, and students of all ages. Their outreach contributions also include forest management and wildlife articles here, as well as being a resource for content and photos for *Pennsylvania Forests* magazine. They are frequent program presenters for forest/woodland owner groups.

In addition, the Jacksons serve as officers of the Woodland Owners of the Southern Alleghenies, members of the PA Forest Stewards Steering Committee; they are Pennsylvania Forestry Association members and are part of the PA Tree Farm program. Laura serves on the Finley Center for Private Forests Council.

The Sandy Cochran Award for Excellence in Natural Resources Education honors individuals or



Sandy Cochran Award recipients Mike and Laura Jackson (as we are so fortunate to see in each edition of this newsletter).

Photo by Leslie Boorhem-Stephenson/ Chesapeake Bay Program.

programs designing, developing, and implementing educational programs focused on the conservation and management of Pennsylvania's natural resources. Its namesake, Roe S. "Sandy" Cochran, 1925-1991, served as the Penn State University forest resources extension specialist based in Ridgway, PA, for 25 very productive years. Sandy spearheaded numerous initiatives in the forestry community, was acknowledged as someone who "could see the big picture," and was known for his compassion for the people who were connected to Penn's Woods.

Like Sandy Cochran, Laura and Mike have dedicated and demonstrated their commitment to forest education and the importance of forest stewardship. We congratulate you both; the Pennsylvania Forest Stewards are so privileged to count you as exemplary members!

Fledgling, continued from page 7

Wham!...Oh, that hurt! Must have overestimated the distance...Where is that morsel?...Oh, here it is, under my right leg...No you don't, I got you... Screech, screech, hey dad, I got him!... Hey mom, look at this!...Dinner is served...I can hardly wait to chow down!

His parents both breathed a sigh of relief when they saw him connect with the snake and fly proudly back up to the dead tree. They would let him enjoy his first kill by himself while they both continued to look for mice and moles, which were found and enjoyed later in the afternoon.

Having all eaten, the family took off and flew back toward the nest. When they arrived, the youngster landed and looked up, waiting for his folks to join him as they always did to nest with him at night. This night however, they both swooped down, one behind the other, and called out a loud goodbye to the young one. It was time for them to move on, to find new hunting grounds, to begin the preparation for fall. This they would do alone, so they were not only saying goodbye to him but to each other. The mating, the rearing, the weaning, the nurturing, and the maturing had all happened as it was supposed to. It was time to go.

He watched them glide off, one to the east and other to the west. No sadness, no fear—he had gained his independence with his first flight and proved himself on his first hunt. He knew he would be just fine, if he could avoid the pesky crows that so often bothered redtails and if he was able to stay away from humans and their guns. He stretched his wings, then gently lifted off the nest for the last time, deciding he, too, would find new skies to fly.

Looking up, it was possible to see three hawks flying in perfect lines toward three points of the compass, mom to the east, dad to the west, and junior to the north.

The Back Page: A Fledgling's First Step

By Bob Slagter, PA Forest Steward and Retired Steering Committee Chair, Class of '08

All of us have a favorite friend in the woods. It's that animal that captures our imagination like no other. I always have admired hawks. I have watched them ride thermals for hours while singing, "Eat, eat, eat." So, I imagined this flight of a young hawk. Forgive the anthropomorphic leanings and enjoy the thermal trip.

He perched on the edge, talons dangling into space, knowing this was an all-or-nothing step he was taking. One step into the void. He should wait for his parents; they had cared for him very well since birth, bringing him fresh food and coating the place with a fresh downy carpet for his warmth and comfort.

His mom and dad worked together to keep him warm and safe since his birth in early spring. They took turns sitting with him and working around the place, always on the lookout for danger as well as for dining opportunities. Those spring mornings could be very cold and sometimes wet as well, and he was sure he would have died without the comforting warmth he enjoyed in the nest. As far as he could remember, right back to his early naked days, he had never felt threatened...he was a proud redtail.

He had watched his parents as they sang to him in midair, circling the nest. He knew they were showing him tricks that he would need to use when he took wing. The best time of the day (other than dinner time) was during these air shows. Mom was very good at soaring, but dad was incredible. His favorite trick to watch was when his dad spotted a mouse close to the nesting tree. Dad would soar in ever-tightening circles, always keeping one eye on the prey. As the circles got really small, he would seem to almost stop in midair and let out one really loud SCREECH, then fold his wings tight to his body and dive straight to the ground, gaining incredible speed all the way down. The call would startle the boy, but, more importantly, it would really scare the mouse into making a run for it far below. The mouse never made it. Somehow dad would flair his wings at the last split second as he slammed his talons into the mouse. All that was heard was the last small peep as the mouse's life ended. It was the best time he could think of, watching dad get dinner then getting to eat the dinner.

Now it was his turn to try his wings. Every day seemed to bring more and bigger feathers to his frame. He had always felt he would know when it was time to take the plunge, and today was the day, what with the gentle updraft stirring his breast feathers as he gazed from the crotch of the beech tree down the slope toward the small creek lapping the rocks at the floor of the valley.

Mom and dad suddenly appeared, slowly circling, watching him and gently calling to let him know they were there and to show how excited they were about this moment. They, too, needed to move on, to feed themselves, and the quicker he made this flight, the quicker they could begin stocking up the weight they would need to migrate to the southern mountains this fall. They had let him know he was ready for some time, first by nudging him from the center to the edge of the nest and, more recently, by cutting back on the rations of rodent they provided. The hunger drove him, sure, but even without it, he wanted to take wing. He knew he belonged riding the wind—that is what he as a hawk was born for.

Stretch the wing muscles, spread the tail feathers, feel the wind, call to the folks and...WHEE!...Here we go!...Whoa... Flap the wings...Losing altitude...Flapping faster now...Falling...I know, mom, the wings are going as fast as they can...What do you mean, relax, dad?...Relax and spread both the wings and the tail WAY out...OK...YEAH...That's better; slowing



The beauty of a Red-tailed Hawk taking flight.
Photo by Laura Kirt.

the drop...Leveling out now...Whew, that little stream with the rocks was coming up FAST...Hey, was that a thermal?...It felt like a giant gentle hand lifting my whole body...If I just slightly bend my outboard wing feathers and twitch my last two or three tail feathers, I can turn when I want...Cool!...Hey, mom...Hey, dad...Look at baby boy go!

It was like being born again, much better than he ever thought it would be. The view from the tree had been good, but this was way cooler. He could see for miles, and, as he climbed higher, he could see the whole range of blue-gray mountains stretch forever below him. This was the Allegheny Front, a uniquely beautiful and ancient range of mountains that would now be his to roam.

His mom and dad joined him, one on each wing, and began showing him some of the tricks of flying. They flew in loose formation and demonstrated wide circles and small circles. They showed him how to gain altitude with just a few wing beats by flapping with the entire wing just as the breeze caught him in the face. They showed him how to ride the wind, covering many miles in just a few minutes. And finally, the best lesson came as he and his dad practiced the tuck and dive. Just short dives at first, then longer and longer until he was able to dive from many feet in the air and pull up just short of the ground.

Hunger soon replaced excitement as his major *raison d'être*, and, with his parents, he started out on his first hunt. Dad landed next to an old field in a dead tree and mom landed some distance away. The boy landed where he could watch them and the field while he began to really use his eyes for the first time. He soon was able to see minute details on the floor of the field, even the bees buzzing in the wildflowers. His dad was the first to spot the garter snake as it moved across a small pile of rocks. Dad immediately took off and began a large circle. The youngster mimicked his dad and soon was able to spot the snake. His concentration was intense as he focused his entire being on the prey and moved in ever-tightening circles until, in a split second directly above the snake, he SCREECHED and dove tight and fast straight toward the rock pile.

Fledgling, continued on page 6

Pennsylvania Forest Stewards
The Pennsylvania State University
The James C. Finley Center for Private Forests
416 Forest Resources Building
University Park, PA 16802

Begin Recording Your Stewardship Efforts for the 2025 PAFS Survey

We want to remind all PA Forest Steward volunteers to keep track of their stewardship efforts over the next 12 months, both outreach and on your own property. Every other year in October, we send all active Stewards a survey to help us learn about—and quantify—the overall impact PA Forest Stewards have promoting forest stewardship across Pennsylvania and beyond.

In late October 2025, we will ask you to share stewardship efforts you undertook during the prior 12 months, both your outreach activities as a volunteer and your work on your own property. We encourage you to keep notes about your activities from now through October 2025 so that you will be able to readily complete the survey when you receive it.

Your responses are very important, both as a measure of your impact and for funding. Thank you for your help!

Dates for Your Calendar

Thursday, March 6, 2025. Forest Health, Insect, and Disease Briefing. Penn Stater Hotel and Conference Center.

Friday, March 7 & Saturday, March 8, 2025. 6th Biennial Forest Landowners Conference. Penn Stater Hotel and Conference Center.

For more information about these and other upcoming events, check the Finley Center website:

ecosystems.psu.edu/private-forests

Remembering PA Forest Stewards We've Lost

We recently learned of the loss of these fellow Pennsylvania Forest Steward volunteers:

- Karen Atwood (Class of '91, the first class of Stewards)
- Bob Brindle (Class of '06)

Our thoughts are with the families. We appreciate each Steward's service; if you hear of any of our volunteers who have passed away, please let us know.

Program Sponsors and Partners

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Penn State Forestry and Wildlife Extension
PA DCNR Bureau of Forestry
USDA Forest Service

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