

THE STORYKEEPERS

William Zinsser died last month. He was a writer and a Harvard professor, and once said that the saddest sentence he'd ever heard was, "I wish I'd asked my mother about that."

Late in his long career, Zinsser became passionate about memoirs, and encouraged writers to put people's stories on paper. Once we're gone, we're gone for good. And unless someone has taken the time to preserve the bits and pieces of who were, then our stories are gone for good, too.

It's true. My grandfather died when I was just a kid, long before I realized how important it was to ask about his work at a Schuylkill County coal breaker. It's too late to talk to him now, but lucky for me there are at least a half dozen coal mining museums within driving distance, places I can go to still hear his story.

This is what museums do. They serve as our storykeepers, stockpiling the answers to questions about our past – even the ones we haven't thought yet to ask.

Eckley Miner's Village, the No.9 Mine Museum, and the Anthracite Heritage Museum, just to name a few, held on to everything for me (and for every other "coal cracker" in the region) keeping it all safe until I finally came around to realizing that stories of my past dictate who I am in the present.

There are all *kinds* of stories worth keeping, far more than what our parents and grandparents can relate. There's the story of how the hammer evolved into such a popular tool, or how roller skating became a favorite American pastime; there's the story of kidney dialysis, of spicy mustard, and of the vacuum cleaner; there's the story of the kazoo, the banana, the tow truck, and the sewers beneath the glittering streets of Paris.

You guessed it! Somewhere in the world is a museum devoted to keeping each of these stories alive.

Even the story of the moist towelette is securely kept and curated (oh, thank *goodness*) at a museum in East Lansing, Michigan.

Historical collections are important for sure, but I'm partial to natural history museums myself. If you ask me, that's where all the really good stories are kept.

I remember going to the American Museum of Natural History in New York, looking up at a T-Rex and trying to imagine the fossilized bones covered in real muscle and skin, the mouth full of saliva and stink-breath. It gave me a humbling, goose-bumpy feeling unlike anything I'd ever felt before.

Dinosaurs still move me the same way. Just last year I stood in front of the T-Rex at the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia and got those goose-bumps all over again. Of all the stories in all the world, that of the Tyrannosaur has got to be one of the best.

As an adult, I've come to appreciate natural history museums not just for what's on display, but for what's not. Worldwide, they hold 1.5 *billion* specimens, collected by thousands of naturalist explorers over hundreds of years.

Museums care for everything from whale skeletons to microscopic scraps of tissue, documenting each specimen's history down to the smallest detail. Museum scientists painstakingly record massive amounts of data, by hand on special acid-free paper, with inks designed to last for hundreds of years. They go to great, meticulous lengths to save all of these wonderful stories, in as much detail and for as long as is humanly possible.

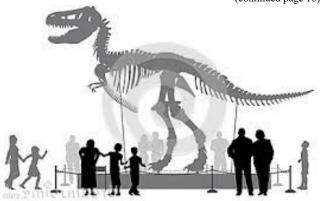
I once listened to a museum scientist talk for no less than forty five minutes about specimen jars – jars! – and the best kinds of lids and uses for each. He would have stayed on topic far longer I'm sure, had he not gotten sidetracked on the many museums applications of scotch tape. These museum people are hard core.

Thanks to the internet, these people and the stories they hold are also incredibly *accessible*. I "lurk" on a few email list serves run by museum professionals, eavesdropping on their conversations. A lot of it revolves around (you guessed it) jars and lids and tape, but there's so much more.

Remember that movie, "The Ghost and the Darkness"? It featured Val Kilmer as an 1890s British Colonel determined to kill two lions that had taken to eating workers on an African railroad bridge project. The film was loosely based on a true story, and those lions did exist.

After being shot and killed (and serving as floor rugs for several years) the real lions' remains were sold to the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago, where their skins and bones reside to this day.

(continued page 10)



Summer Schedule

Spring Plant Swap Saturday, June 13, 11:00 am to 2:00 pm

Attention gardeners! Dig up and separate any plants in need of thinning or removal, bring them to the swap and trade with other gardeners for something new! All plant enthusiasts welcome, whether or not they have something to share.

CCEEC Mushroom Club Monday, June 15, 6:00 pm

Many of our members have expressed an interest in creating an informal club for mushroom-related get-togethers. This will be the first meeting, and all ages and interest levels are invited to attend. Participants are encouraged to bring their favorite stories and recipes to share. The evening may include a short hike, so field guides and appropriate shoes are recommended. Mushrooms may also be brought along for identification.
Call for more information or to register.

Outdoor Survival Wednesday, June 17, 7:00 pm

Naturalist Franklin Klock presents his ever-popular program, appropriate for all ages.

"Outdoor Survival" offers some common sense tips on how not to end up in trouble in the first place, as well as hands-on practice in building makeshift shelters and fires.

Pre-registration is a must. The program is free for all EEC members, and a \$5 fee is requested of non-members.

Creepy Crawlers - "Lovely Leaves" - Monday, June 22, 10 —11:30 am

The "Crawler" program is open to all 2, 3 and 4 year olds. Each month's topic focuses on some aspect of nature, and includes age-appropriate activities. The program is free for CCEEC members. A \$3 donation per child is requested of nonmembers.

Open House Sunday, July 12, 1:00 – 4:00 pm

Members, neighbors and friends—all are welcome to our annual Open House event! There will be games and crafts for the kids, live animals, refreshments, and a Basket Raffle fundraiser for all. Check out CCEEC "behind the scenes" meet our staff, and visit the special "Old Wives' Tales" station. All are invited to this free program.

Creepy Crawlers - "Ants & Friends" - Monday, July 20, 10 —11:30 am

The "Crawler" program is open to all 2, 3 and 4 year olds. Each month's topic focuses on some aspect of nature, and includes age-appropriate activities. The program is free for CCEEC members. A \$3 donation per child is requested of non-members.

Kids' Week! - Monday through Friday, July 27-31 -10:00 am to Noon

An annual day-camp where kids will make new friends, explore a variety of topics, and get outside! This year's session is open to students entering grades K to 6. A \$35 fee is requested for each child.

Topics to be Announced

Summer Schedule

CCEEC Mushroom Club Sunday, August 9, 9:00 am

The second meeting of the newly-formed mush-room club features a talk by "Mushroom Lady" Laura Weishaupt, on the fundamentals of using a field guide. Laura will offer recommendations on choosing the guides that best suit the purposes of field i.d., and go over some basic taxonomy. Call for more information or to register.

Birding: Beginner Level and Up Saturday, September 12, 8:00 am

EEC volunteer and birder extraordinaire Rob Bergstresser leads this easy walk for all ages and interest levels. Rob begins with a short introduction on how to properly use binoculars and field guides, then heads out onto the trails to look and listen for birdlife.

Dress for the weather (and some mud). Participants are asked to bring their binoculars and field guides, though a few of each will be available to borrow. The program is free, but registration is required.

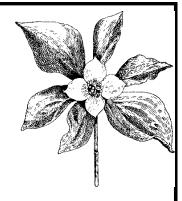
Wildlife Rehabilitation Basics Saturday & Sunday, September 12 & 13 and 19 & 20

CCEEC is hosting this class, administered and taught by staff of Red Creek Wildlife Center of Schuylkill Haven.

Designed for individuals interested in becoming licensed wildlife rehabilitators, the series covers the knowledge and skills needed to apply for rehabilitation permits in Pennsylvania. It is also suitable for those looking to volunteer at CCEEC or any wildlife center.

The class includes four days of classroom study, three online classes, and free access to future online rehabilitation classes offered by Red Creek. For cost information or to register call Red Creek at (570) 739-4393.

Please register for all programs in advance by calling (570) 645-8597.



Unless noted, all ages are welcome at each program.

Most are free for EEC members. There is a \$5 fee per person for non-members, unless otherwise indicated.

Cool Stuff I've Learned About Birds Wednesday, August 19, 6:00 pm

Chief Naturalist Susan Gallagher shares odd observations and anecdotes, collected over the course of nearly 30 years of caring for raptors in captivity. Susan will share stories of orphaned and injured animals, including mammals, ducks, songbirds and others.

The program is free of charge, and open to ages 12 and up.



Special Events

Rattlesnake Run

run!

Saturday, June 20, 8:00 am

This is the fourth year for CCEEC's exciting 5K run and one mile fun walk, held at Lehigh Gorge State Park. There are free T-shirts and organic baked goods for participants, and runners have the chance to win some unique awards.

The event is open to all ages and levels of ability, with new runners especially welcome.
Call for more details, or email Susan Gallagher at sugal@ptd.net

Paddle Party! Date & Time To Be Announced

CCEEC Naturalist will lead all paddling enthusiasts on a relaxing trek across Mauch Chunk Lake. Bring your own properly permitted craft (canoe, kayak or stand-up paddle board) and personal floatation device. Franklin will explore the shallow reaches of the lake, in search of birds, turtles and other wildlife.

The program is free of charge, and open to all ages (small children and dogs are welcome, but only if they've had previous paddlecraft experience.

Call to register, and you'll be alerted in advance of the day and time chosen. Additional programs scheduled if enough interest.

Whitewater Rafting Sunday, July 19, 10am—3pm

This fundraiser is made possible through the generosity of Whitewater Rafting Adventures of Nesquehoning, and is open to ages 5 and up. For the super-low cost of \$20 for CCEEC members, and \$25 for non-members, you can enjoy the "summer float" section of the Lehigh with us.

Bring your own lunch—and bring a friend! Pre-registration and pre-payment required.

CONSERVATION CAMP

Monday through Friday, August 11 to 15

This weeklong event takes place at Hickory Run State Park, and allows children ages 8 through 12 the opportunity to connect with nature through hands-on activities. Campers enjoy hikes, crafts, games, rafting, campfires, and plenty of healthy, outdoor play. By the end of the week, all are tired and dirty—but full of new experiences to remember. For more information, or to begin the process of registration, call CCEEC.

Congratulations to the winners of CCEEC's annual photography contest!

1st Place Macro, Ed Mulligan, Lehighton— "Future Caterpillar"

1st Place Landscape, Donna Kruslicky, Summit Hill—"Hazy Shade of Winter"

1st Place Wildlife, Sheri Ryan, Lansford— "Princess & The Frog"

Best in Show, Renee Garrison, Lehighton—"Pickled"

People's Choice, Donna Kruslicky, Summit Hill—"Sandcastles to Snowmen"





See us at the Sanctuary!

CCEEC takes its show on the road for four programs at Bear Mountain Butterfly Sanctuary, located on route 903 outside Jim Thorpe.

Reservations are needed for ALL shows!!! Tickets \$6.00 -Limited seating, so please email Mari at Bear Mountain to hold your tickets: bearmb@ptd.net

Super Sunday Owls June 21 @ 5:15 - 6:30 pm

Butterfly and Frog fun plus owl DVDs, owl crafts all day and a live owl show at day's end. Question & Answer session and refreshments to follow.

SUPER Sunday Reptiles & Snakes June 28 @ 5:15- 6:30 pm

Butterfly and Frog fun plus a live Reptile show at day's end. Question & Answer session and refreshments to follow.

Super Sunday: Live Birds of Prey July 26 @ 5:15 - 6:30 pm

Butterflies, Frogs and Hawks, Owls, Oh my !!! Special crafts for children throughout the day. Live owls at this fun, educational, and fascinating program. Light refreshments to follow program.

Kids's Day August 2 @ 5:30- 7:00 pm

Are you as clever as a fox? Quiet as a mouse? Smart as an owl? Are animals really clever or smart? Come find out! Explore the animals' lives and take on the roles of the animals to see if you have what it takes to survive. Good Luck!

Animal games, crafts and snacks are included in this interactive and fun program.



The Girls of Summer

Despite limited staff, we do our best to set regular weekend hours for summer visitors.

Memorial Day through Labor Day, we will be open every Saturday and Sunday, from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm (barring any unforeseen emergencies).

Caring for our animals and welcoming visitors into the building on weekends will be "Saturday's Girl" Kat Werner, pictured left, and "Sunday's Girl" Valerie Schoeneberger, pictured right.

Stop in for a visit, and remember our trails and outdoor facilities are open every day, sunrise to sunset.



Creature Corner



Above— The box turtle doesn't care much for the menu. He retreats inside his shell despite the delicacies we've offered. Above right—The water turtle doesn't care much for the accommodations. He attempts an escape from his cardboard box on a shelf. The turtle resided there only briefly until we were able to free up a clinic cage.

Below—The newly released opossum immediately sought a well-camouflaged shelter beneath a rock.

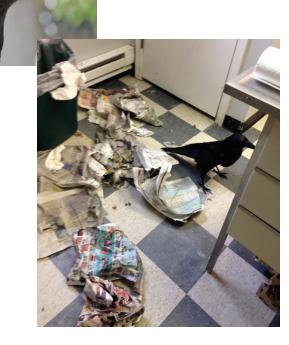
We carried this guy all the way to the the other side of Mauch Chunk Lake in an effort to keep him away from the highway Above—We thought the caller from Lackawanna County might be describing an orphaned greathorned owl, and asked her to send a cell phone picture.

Imagine our surprise—A healthy long-eared owl!

Below—What happens when an injured raven manages to escape his cage while recovering in our hospital room? It's about as bad a mess as a curious toddler might make.

Garbage everywhere.











So many birds! Clockwise from top left—A black vulture admitted with an old wing injury, very skinny and very tired; a common loon poses before release on open water; a pileated woodpecker poses, too. (The cage door is open and he's ready to head back out after suffering a concussion from a window strike); a hummingbird takes a break between frequent feedings.

Our thanks to the staff at Lehighton Animal Hospital, St. Francis Animal Hospital and Companion Animal Hospital for their help in caring for wildlife.





At left—A first for CCEEC!
Orphaned coyote pups spent a
short time with us before transfer
to Red Creek Wildlife Center of
Schuylkill Haven.
CCEEC lacks the appropriate
housing for long-term care of
some mammals, and is happy to
partner with Red Creek to ensure
these guys have the best chance at

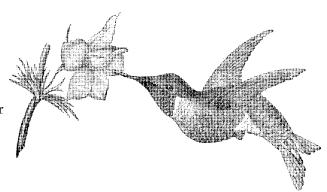
release.

Naturalist Notes

learned a few interesting torpor facts.

By Jeannie Carl

Over the past few years, I've had the honor of caring for injured hummingbirds, and while I have to say I don't like that they come to us in the first place, they are fascinating to take care of.



Something I learned early on was their ability to conserve energy by going into a hibernative state called torpor. Experiencing this for the first time, I was certain they were dying as I cupped them gently in my hands. Slowly, they "came to life" and began feeding with renewed enthusiasm from a pipette. This phenomenon interested me so much I did some reading and

When in torpor, a hummingbird's heart rate can drop from the normal active rate of 1,260 beats per minute to as few as 50 beats per minute, and the normal body temperature of 104° will drop to as low as 70°. It can take up to an hour for a hummingbird to fully recover from torpor and it can be fatal to a weak hummingbird.

Hummingbirds are the only birds that can fly both forward and backwards as well as hover in mid-air, fly sideways and even upside-down while rotating those wings in a full circle. While average speeds are about 30 mph, a hummingbird can dive up to 60 miles per hour.

These tiny birds are omnivores, meaning while they are known to drink the nectar of plants, they also dine on spiders and small bugs. Hummingbirds have been seen plucking insects out of spiders' webs. They are not rescuing these insects; they are helping themselves to an easy meal. Another unusual behavior is hovering around woodpecker holes using tree sap as a food source.

An adult ruby-throated hummingbird can eat anywhere from half to eight times its body weight a day. A hummingbird will visit an average of 1,000 flowers per day for nectar, eating approximately 7-8 times per hour. Ornithologists have claimed that hummingbirds are extremely intelligent and can remember every flower they have been to and how long it will take a flower to refill with nectar.

The ruby-throated humming bird is the only hummingbird species to breed in eastern North America. The males pick out some prime real estate (territories) and attract females by showing off their red "bib". The gorget (think "gorgeous") of iridescent feathers changes in color depending on the angle and is distinctive. And, if the females don't notice the red throat, the males have a dance routine. They fly overhead about 20 feet moving back and forth and occasionally perching beside her from a distance of six feet. Surely, after witnessing this spectacle, it is enough to convince her to mate. After all, who can resist a handsome male who knows how to dance?

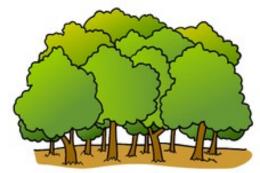
The female is responsible for nest building and repairs as well as solely caring for young hummingbirds. They do not mate for life and the males may fertilize many females in a breeding season. Building materials consist of such things as pine cone scales, mosses, thistle and cattail fluff, lichens that are all bound together by spider webs. Some creative materials include the filters from discarded cigarettes.

Females will lay one to three eggs and incubate them for about two weeks, continuing to feed the young for about three weeks. A hummingbird baby is generally smaller than a penny but grows quickly.

Forestry Notes

By Allison Muth

Where has all the water gone? Two weeks ago on a Sunday hike at Penn State's Rock Springs agricultural research farm west of State College, there were flowing drainages, puddled water full of amphibian eggs, and plenty of places for a thirsty dog to get a drink. This past weekend those cooling spots were gone in the agricultural areas; but in the woods there were still good spots with flowing water to take a welcome break.



Water is in the news more than ever. On the national perspective, we're watching the droughts continue in the western United States. Debates are held and feasibility studies undertaken on moving water from the Great Lakes westward, who has the right to the water in the Colorado River, and when do agricultural water needs trump community needs.

Here in Pennsylvania, twenty-seven of our sixty-seven counties remain under a drought watch. By comparison to many places in the world, we are very fortunate. But despite it feeling like a wet and gray winter, it hasn't translated into a very wet spring. We are blessed to have the giant sponges that are forested watersheds to help us out. Penn's Woods isn't just about the trees.

Forests and water are intricately interwoven. Forest soils are one of the most absorptive types of soils that exist. Hydrologists use a device called an infiltrometer to determine permeability, an instrument that measures the time it takes for a soil or surface to absorb water. For example, asphalt does not absorb water; which instead sits there until it evaporates in the hot sun. A lawn has the ability to absorb about one inch per hour and then water starts flowing over the top, making its way to the storm sewers or puddling until the hot sun dries it out. Grass roots don't go very deep and the soil is often compacted by lawn mowers. Forest soils have been shown to absorb up to 15 inches or more per hour. We rarely experience rain events that exceed that rate!

Forest soils are giant sponges. The top layer, the duff layer, is covered in leaves and vegetation that intercept falling water and slow it down -- preventing raindrops from hitting the soil and dislocating soil particles to move away, as sediment, in flowing water. Forest soils have lots of macropores (big holes made by worms, insects, dead tree roots, live tree roots) that allow water to move quickly into the ground. And they have micropores (small holes) that hold onto the water and keep it available for plants and animals to use it.

Water infiltrates until it saturates the soil or fills the holes completely. It then begins to move through the soil, until it hits bedrock or clay or another surface that it can't get through. Water then flows sideways downhill until it comes out in streams or gets held in groundwater reservoirs. It takes a long time for water to move through that system. The soil organisms also help filter the water, removing pollutants and excess nutrients that could harm stream life. Many, many urban centers (Boston and New York City, for example) use forested watersheds to provide their clean drinking water with minimal treatment. The forest soils absorb, hold, and filter water, releasing it steadily over time.

At the same time, forests can be thought of as big straws. Trees move a lot of water through their trunks and out their leaves as they photosynthesize and breathe. Recently, most all of our trees have leafed out (the black walnuts are still breaking bud in our neck of the woods). The giant straw is coming online. Without additional rain, the trees pull that water from the sponge of the soil, which means that

Only recently did scientists there discover that one lion had been suffering from a broken tooth, which could help to explain its unusual man-eating habits.

The discovery made the rounds of the list serves, and I actually got to correspond with Dr. Bruce Patterson, the mammalogist who'd uncovered the find.

Why did it take so long for anyone to realize the lion's teeth were so bad?

Because no one had ever thought to look before. What a story!

That scenario of simple discovery plays out a hundred times a day, in museums all over the world. Scientists from every discipline ask new questions of old specimens using x-ray technology, CT scans, DNA extraction, and computer generated data analysis. They're solving old puzzles, creating more mysteries, and adding new chapters to the story of life on earth.

Just recently, X-rays of over 800 ancient Egyptian cat mummies (gifts for the departed, akin to our funereal flowers and sympathy cards) revealed no cat parts whatsoever inside more than a third of the specimens!

Analysis of massive amounts of avian DNA done at Chicago's Field Museum now show that (surprise!) falcons and parrots are more closely related to each other than to any other bird.

Even new species of mammals, birds and dinosaurs are discovered with striking frequency - not from recently unearthed fossils, but from specimens that have languished in cabinets and drawers for decades. One museum even discovered a 6,500 year-old human skeleton that it didn't know it had.

This is exactly how museums are supposed to work, preserving specimens well enough, and for long enough, for future scientists with advanced technologies to pick away at their secrets.

The collections our natural history museums hold are like a colossal encyclopedia of life, so big that no one will ever be able to read through the whole thing.

Our own Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia houses one of the largest mollusk collections in the world, with over 10 million specimens! Got snail questions? They got answers, and they will for years to come.

For as important as this task of storykeeping is, it is also woefully underfunded. Limited budgets, staffing and even storage space are common challenges for all museums, large and small.

Last week I stumbled on two separate newspaper articles, one lamenting budget cuts to London's Royal Botanical Gardens, home to one of the world's largest plant collections, the other a short piece on the financial struggles of a firefighting history museum right here in Shenandoah, Pennsylvania.

If we don't support these storykeepers, and make sure they stay afloat, someone else may. For natural history museums this isn't always good news. Ideally, these institutions carry a message that is free of politics and special interests. Is total objectivity possible, say, when fossil fuel lobbyists are contributing tens of millions of dollars?

David Koch of Koch Industries, one of the biggest greenhouse gas producers in the U.S., sits on the board at both the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History and the American Museum of Natural History. Both institutions are adamant that no special interests influence the content of their displays or education materials.

But still, people are talking, and some academics are insisting Koch step down, lest any scientific establishment be tempted to alter their message on Climate Change, even if just slightly, in order to please the sponsors with the deepest pockets. Scientific integrity and authority are just too important.

A lack of funding isn't the only modern day threat to our museums. Think about the terrorists who targeted visitors to a Tunisian art museum, and the ones who destroyed 3,000 year-old Iraqi stone figures with sledge hammers.

These are crimes against all humanity, on par with an assault on a maternity ward; our collective past should be valued and safeguarded just as well as our future.

Think of all that's lost to natural disasters. Entire collections are destroyed by floods and insect pests; wax museums catch fire in London, and Corvette museums fall into sinkholes in Kentucky.

Think of the statues, temples and monuments felled by the earthquake in Nepal. Stories lost, all of them.

This is sad stuff, especially when you figure there's not much we can do to prevent wars or natural disasters. But there *are* ways we can help.

Each one of us can choose the stories we feel are most important – whether it's coal mining or firefighting, dinosaurs or moist towelettes. We can help the storykeepers. We can send them \$1, or \$10, or whatever we can afford. We can support their fundraisers – buy a pizza or run a 5K. We can like them on facebook, volunteer a few hours of our time somewhere, or maybe even just write down all those things the storykeepers in our own families might have to share.

We can remember that their stories are our stories, that each one is valuable in some way, and that they're all far too precious to ever be lost for good.

- Susan Gallagher



(Naturalist, from page 8)

The spider's web that binds the nest together stretches to accommodate the young as they grow.

Some tips for feeding these winged beauties include hanging several feeders to avoid "fights", hanging the feeders near flowers to entice them to check out the feeders, keeping the feeder out of direct sunlight, never cleaning with harsh chemicals, and avoiding red dye.

I always wondered how in the world hummingbirds found my feeder within about a half hour of putting it out for the spring. Now, knowing that they are rather intelligent it all makes sense. So, now that the hummingbird feeders are up and waiting, I think I will sit quietly, camera in hand, and enjoy a glass of ice tea and wait for the "show".

Hummingbird Stats

Length: 3.75" (10 cm) Weight: 2-20 grams (A penny weighs 2.5 grams)

Wingspan: 4.5" (12 cm) Oldest Recorded: 12 years

Favorite Recipe: 1 part sugar to 4 parts water

(Forests, from pag 9))

stream flow drops. Groundwater will continue to flow into those streams keeping it at base flow levels, but perhaps not as much moisture is passing through the soil. Trees move the water out of the soil and into the atmosphere, contributing to moisture in the air, and hopefully cloud formation that will bring more precipitation and keep us green and vibrant.

Both the giant sponge and big straw are vital to the water cycle and its continuity. As more forests are paved over, as more agricultural lands converted to development, we lose the ability for those soils to work in our favor, keeping streams clean and flowing, providing drinking water, slowing down and absorbing storm water, and ensuring a continuous water cycle from which we benefit.

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"Reflections from the Lake" is published three times annually by the Carbon County Environmental Education Center. It is mailed free to all members of CCEEC and Mauch Chunk Lake Park.

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION CENTER
151 E. WHITE BEAR DR.
SUMMIT HILL, PA 18250
PHONE: (570) 645-8597
FAX: (570) 645-8499
CCEEC@PTD.NET
SUSAN GALLAGHER, CHIEF NATURALIST
JEANNIE CARL, NATURALIST
FRANKLIN KLOCK, PROGRAM ASSISTANT

MAUCH CHUNK LAKE PARK OFFICE
625 LENTZ TRAIL
JIM THORPE, PA 18229
OFFICE: (570) 325-3669
BEACH: (570) 325-2956
DAVID HORVATH, DIRECTOR, PARKS & RECREATION

Mauch Chunk Lake is administered by the Carbon County Parks and Recreation Commission. CCEEC is administered by the Carbon Conservation District. Funding is provided in part by the Carbon County Commissioners.

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