

# Ridge & Valley Vistas

VOLUME 16, NUMBER 4 – WINTER 2007

NEWSLETTER OF THE RIDGE & VALLEY OUTINGS CLUB

## Pike 2 Bike Outing

Greg Tothero

When the Pennsylvania Turnpike opened in 1940, it became America's first superhighway. The new highway was subject to much hype as the "Highway of the Future" or the "Tunnel Highway". The turnpike was built as a four-lane divided highway, except for the seven tunnels, where traffic was forced to merge into a single lane.

I can remember the excitement of traveling through the tunnels as a kid. The traffic jams caused by the bottlenecks, were less exciting.

The turnpike commission solved the bottleneck problems in two ways. Parallel tunnels were dug at four of the seven tunnels. The other three tunnels were bypassed and abandoned.

In October, we visited the Pike 2 Bike trail, an 8½-mile abandoned section of turnpike including two tunnels. The trail begins in Breezewood and goes east, ending near the former Path Valley service plaza.

A group of six RVOC cyclists traveled to Breezewood to ride the Pike 2 Bike. We parked at the location of a former overpass where the Turnpike crossed Rt. 30. After riding up the embankment, we were on the old turnpike. The pavement had become rough over thirty-nine years of abandonment, and the narrow grass median and roadsides were overgrown, but it was still recognizable as the turnpike.

After riding east for a mile, we came to the Rays Hill tunnel. The Rays Hill tunnel was a half-mile long, and the other end was visible from the entrance. We turned on our lights and rode through.

Between the tunnels was a four-mile stretch of highway. At one point the road crossed an overpass with the art deco styling still visible. Then we came to the Sideling Hill Tunnel, which, at 6800 feet long, was the longest tunnel on the turnpike. In the middle of the Sideling Hill Tunnel, neither end was visible. At the other end, we stopped for lunch, and to talk to some other cyclists. There were quite a few people out riding that day.

A building is built around each of the tunnel portals to house ventilation equipment. We were able to go inside the ground floor of decaying building. Inside was a small garage, a coal bin, and the bottom of a stairwell. The stairs had rusted so badly that steps were missing. Some of us climbed around the hill outside of the building and see the large blowers from outside.

Near the end of the route was a former rest stop. The large parking lot remained, but a clump of trees marked the location

of the building.

On the return trip, a west wind began to blow. We had to fight a strong wind through the Rays Hill tunnel.

The Pike 2 Bike was an enjoyable outing. Much of the surrounding area is part of Buchanan State Forest. The new turnpike is far enough away that we only noticed the noise in one or two places. It was fun visiting some of Pennsylvania's past. I'm sure that we will return in the future.



Approaching the Rays Hill Tunnel

## WEEKLY SCHEDULED HIKES

### *Tuesday Mornings — Centre Regions Senior Citizens' Hiking Group*

Everyone over 50 years of age is welcome to join the group for easy 2-4 mile hikes and nature walks. Meeting: 9:00 A.M. to noon at the Westerly Parkway Shopping Center in State College. Contact the Senior Center at 814-231-1358.

### *Wednesday Mornings — University Women's Club Hiking Group*

All ages and genders welcome. Meeting: 9:00 A.M.-2 P.M. at the Westerly Parkway Shopping Center in State College. Contact Falene Hamilton 814 238-5695 or Ann Hettmansperger 814-238-6482.

## Snowy day, swans

Jean Aron

Their sound traveled well ahead of them through the snow-filled air – a noisy high-pitched honking, and ponderous flapping. Swans, I thought, as I finished brushing the white fluff from my front porch. I smiled at the memory of a friend's description of this organized traffic jam of birds – "They sound like geese in tight shorts", he had said.

Four inches of new powder, falling all day long, had turned the earth, houses, trees, air and sky a uniform white. Snow, the great leveler, was smoothing the rough edges of the world. I could not see Tussey Mountain nor Mount Nittany, as I usually can. Snow limited my vision to just a small, tidy part of my neighborhood.

Although I did not believe the swans could possibly be visible, I looked around hopefully anyway. As the sound grew louder, I realized the swans were headed straight towards me. Then they appeared, like a living bas-relief sculpture, long-necked, great white birds, outlined against a white sky. Cruising low, in a loose, jostling V-formation the swans flew directly over my house.

"Look", I shouted. "Swans. Tundra swans. A whole bunch of them." I was too enthralled to count, but I guess there were about 40 birds, all seeming larger-than-life. Perhaps temporarily disoriented in the snow, they were headed east, but then turned left at the neighbor's house and headed north. A moment later I heard them again to the west and south. I think they circled Boalsburg, calling for stragglers: "Heep! Heep! Calling all swans. Last chance. Flight leaving for parts south. Heep! Heep!" Then the noise diminished quickly on an eastward course towards Colyer Lake.

I put away my snow shovel with a warm feeling of satisfaction. The snow had been feather-light, and provided me with honest work for a short time, and an excuse to be outdoors in a weird wonderful world. How lucky I was to witness the Flight of the White Swans!

*Happy Winter Everybody*



### JOIN THE RVOC LISTSERV

The ListServ is an automated email list that allows any RVOC members to communicate with all other members on the list server using a single email address.

Our address is [RVOC-L@LISTS.PSU.EDU](mailto:RVOC-L@LISTS.PSU.EDU). To subscribe to the ListServ, email the ListServ manager, Lew Logan at [LPL103@psu.edu](mailto:LPL103@psu.edu).

The ListServ is a great way to be reminded about outings and contact other RVOC members who may be interested in joining private or impromptu outings on short notice. *You do NOT need to be a RVOC member to receive the mailing list.*

## Hiking from Musser Gap to Shingletown Gap

Greg Tothero

In October, I read Scott Adams' report on a hike in Musser Gap. Musser Gap is a new portion of Rothrock State Forest that was acquired by the Clearwater Conservancy. After reading Scott's report, I was curious whether it was possible to hike from Musser to Shingletown, so I advertised a last-minute outing

Hiking in two inches of fresh snow, we found a route. I describe the route from Musser to Shingletown because it is easier to navigate in that direction. I estimate that the total distance is about four miles.

The Musser Gap parking area is on Route 45 about one-mile east of Route 26. Look for a gravel road that climbs the road bank. Traveling from Rt. 26, the road is on the right.

The first half of the hike follows Scott Adams' route. From the parking area, you will be able to see a gate on a dirt road. Climb through or over the gate and follow the road uphill. Eventually, you will pass an abandoned reservoir. Shortly after passing the reservoir, there will be a fork in the trail. Be sure to take the left fork. This will take you to a power line. Turn left and follow the power line over a mile to the top of the ridge. This is the turn-around point on Scott's hike.

At the top of the ridge, look to the right for an unmarked trail that follows the ridge top. Follow that trail. Within a mile, this trail will meet a blazed trail. The blazes are white with a blue line in the middle. Turn right and follow this trail down the ridge. Soon, the trail will meet a blue-blazed trail. Follow the blue blazes downhill to the left. This trail will take you all the way to Shingletown Gap, where you cross the stream on a large hemlock log.

On a beautiful, warm October afternoon, 25 hikers enjoyed the "Wilderness Hike", a 6-mile discovery trek along a future dump highway. They began near Black Moshannon State Park, continued through Moshannon State Forest, finishing at the proposed I-80 landfill interchange, midway between the Snow Shoe and Kylertown Exits. The course followed 3 miles of forestry roads (Huckleberry Road and Meyers Run Road), 1 mile of the "Huckleberry Trail", and 2 miles on a rugged forest haul road. After the hike, informational brochures and maps were available, and hikers were encouraged to take action to help preserve this remote section of forestland. (A Lancaster based developer, Resource Recovery, LLC is proposing to construct a mega landfill in Rush Township, 6 miles from Black Moshannon State Park, with a connector road from I-80, extending south to State Route 504, nearly bordering the Park. To learn more visit [www.stoplandfill.com](http://www.stoplandfill.com)

## Evening Hikes

This year, we continued to hike on Thursday evenings until the first week of November. We plan to resume weekly hikes on Thursdays on March 13. The regular Tuesday night schedule will begin on April 22.

**Tuesday, January 1 - Mt. Nittany Hike**

On January 1, we will have our traditional New Years Day Mt. Nittany climb. This is an informal outing with people hiking at their own pace. We will meet at 10:00 AM at the Lemont post office. Those who hike from the post office will climb 900 feet to the view. Hikers also have the option of driving to the trailhead and doing a 600-foot climb. Once on top, there are several options for loops. Start the year off right by climbing Mt. Nittany!

**Full Moon Party**

RVOC will celebrate its traditional Full Moon Party on Saturday, January 19 at the home of Colina and Ralph Seeley. We will meet at 2:00 PM for cross-country skiing or hiking. We will have a pot-luck dinner at 5:30. After dinner we will do a moonlight walk and look at pictures of RVOC outings. Come for the skiing, dinner or both. For more information or directions, call Ralph at 355-2933.

**Saturday, January 19: Cross Country Skiing on Rock Run Trail**

Sierra Club-Moshannon Group will lead Cross-country skiing on Rock Run Trail, near Black Moshannon State Park in Centre County. This outing will be changed to a winter hike if there is not enough snow for skiing. Contact Gary Thornbloom at [bearknob@verizon.net](mailto:bearknob@verizon.net) or (814)404-1120

**Winter Sports**

One of the biggest challenges in the winter is planning outings, because we cannot anticipate when there will be snow. Inevitably, we will have good snow on a weekend when no outing is scheduled. This winter, outings may be scheduled on the spur of the moment using the listserv. RVOC members who wish to coordinate an outing may advertise their outing using the listserv. Also, Ted and Arlene Pruss have volunteered to lead skiing and snowshoeing outings when there is snow. Those who are interested in skiing or snowshoeing can call Ted or Arlene at 238-2682.

**Spring Council Meeting**

Our spring council meeting is scheduled for Thursday, March 6 at 6:00 PM. At the meeting, we will have our annual election of council members and officers. Anybody who is interested in joining the RVOC council should contact a current council member. All RVOC members are welcome to vote in the election.



Angry Mob on Threatened Wilderness Hike

The RVOC Patch is beautifully embroidered with colored thread and makes a handsome addition to your backpack, hat or other items of clothing used for hiking and outdoor activities. It is available for purchase at most hikes and costs only \$4.00.



**Membership or Renewal Form**

Membership entitles you to all mailings of the club and to vote for representatives on the Executive Council.  
Enclose \$10 per year (Multiple year renewals accepted)

Mail to: RVOC, Inc. c/o Lew Logan  
726 Linnet Lane  
State College, PA 16803

Make your check payable to:  
Falene Hamilton, Treasurer, RVOC, Inc.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ 20\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ e-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_ @ \_\_\_\_\_

RVOC listserv:  Add Me  Do NOT add me  Already Receive

Check your main outdoor interests:  Backpacking;  Biking;  Birding;  Canoeing;  Children's Outings;  
 Fishing;  Foraging;  Hiking;  Photography;  Senior Outings;  X-Country Skiing;  Trailcare;  Wildflowers  
 Snowshoeing;  Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Referred by: \_\_\_\_\_



## Winter Newsletter, 2007

Ridge & Valley Outings Club, Inc.  
726 Linnet Lane  
State College, Pa 16803

<http://rvoc.centreconnect.org>

✓ A *check* on your label means that it is time to renew your membership.

## Ridge and Valley Outings Club, Inc.

Formed on April 22, 1991 with the following statement of purpose... *"to promote the enjoyment of the natural and cultural environment by non-competitive outings events."*

All activities listed in the newsletter are open to the public. A responsible adult **MUST** accompany children under the age of 16 on RVOC-sponsored outings. People wishing to bring a dog **MUST** get leader approval **IN ADVANCE**.

The 7-member Executive Council meets quarterly. Elections are held at the Spring meeting. RVOC members are welcome to attend, to help arrange outings, to run for office and to vote for Council positions. The next council meeting will be Thursday, 29 November 2007 at 3098 Westover Drive, State College. Call (814) 238-5985 or email [gtothero@boltonmetals.com](mailto:gtothero@boltonmetals.com), for directions

Greg Tothero, (814) 238-5985, [gtothero@boltonmetals.com](mailto:gtothero@boltonmetals.com) (2008)

Jean Aron, (814) 466-9260, [shorthiker@aol.com](mailto:shorthiker@aol.com) (2009)

Mary Ann Williams (2008)

Falene Hamilton, (814) 238-5695, [Falene@ceinetworks.com](mailto:Falene@ceinetworks.com) (2009)

Bill Mertens, [monoprint@gmail.com](mailto:monoprint@gmail.com) (2009)

Lew Logan, (814) 238-1482, [LPL103@psu.edu](mailto:LPL103@psu.edu) (2008)

Tom Thwaites, (814) 237-7703, [ttt2@pennswoods.net](mailto:ttt2@pennswoods.net) (2008)

Ralph Seeley, (814) 355-2833, [rsbb219@pennswoods.net](mailto:rsbb219@pennswoods.net) (2008)

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Newsletter

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Co – At Large

Co – At Large

For more information about membership, contact Lew Logan by phoning (814) 238-1482, emailing [LPL103@psu.edu](mailto:LPL103@psu.edu), or writing him at 726 Linnet Lane, State College, Pennsylvania, 16803. Items for the next newsletter may be submitted to Lew Logan at [LPL103@psu.edu](mailto:LPL103@psu.edu).