

## THE CATALYST

### SLIPPERY ROCK WATERSHED COALITION MONTHLY ACTIVITIES UPDATE

**NEXT MEETING:** 12/14/17 meeting canceled. 1/11/18 at Jennings Environmental Education Center, pizza and pop provided. 11/9/17 meeting attendance: C. Denholm, M. Dunn, B. Kuban, S. Smith, W. Taylor, F. VanAtta, S. VanDerWal

### The Eastern Hellbender:

#### Close to Being Named Pennsylvania's State Amphibian

The Eastern Hellbender appears to be well on its way to being officially named the state amphibian of Pennsylvania. Legislation designating the Eastern Hellbender as "State Amphibian" was approved on November 15 by the state Senate. The Eastern Hellbender is native to certain areas where water quality is pristine, so it serves as what is called a "natural indicator" species due to its sensitivity to poor water quality and pollution. If hellbenders are found in a particular waterway, it can be assumed that water is of high quality. Three species of salamanders make up about 20% of herptile groups in the Slippery Rock Watershed. It is exciting to know this particular species of aquatic giant salamander is found in our area!

The unique and curiously likable creature is the largest North American salamander. Its nicknames include snot otter, devil dog, and mud devil. It can grow up to 29 inches and weigh up to five pounds. Hellbenders are solitary, nocturnal, and elusive. Their relatively flat heads and bodies allow them to hide under rocks. They prefer shallow, clear, and fast streams, and need cold, clean water to survive. Researchers from Lycoming College in Williamsport say hellbenders have lived in rivers and streams throughout much of Pennsylvania, except for the Delaware River watershed. The species has lasted through ice ages but is now in decline. Researchers say the population is shrinking because of pollution and warmer water. In Pennsylvania, mine drainage and sedimentation also contribute to the decline.



Chesapeake Bay Foundation's Pennsylvania Student Leadership Council, consisting of high school students, invested many hours studying the Eastern Hellbender and the problems the amphibian is facing within the state. With assistance from Lycoming College, the students drafted Senate Bill 658 and met with elected officials to outline why they felt it should be the state amphibian. Peter Petokas, Ph.D., Amphibian Conservation Biologist at Lycoming College and faculty member of the College's Clean Water Institute, applauded Senate action. "Passage of Senate Bill 658 takes the Eastern Hellbender one step closer to the status of official amphibian of the State of Pennsylvania, a designation that it uniquely deserves and which will help promote conservation programs that protect and sustain the unique amphibian resources of the commonwealth."



We applaud the initiative of the students and hope their efforts will be rewarded. Senate Bill 658 now moves to the House of Representatives. If approved by the House and signed by the Governor, the Eastern Hellbender would join the ranks of the White-Tail Deer as the State Animal, Ruffed Grouse as the State Bird, the Great Dane as the State Dog and the Brook Trout as the State Fish.



Student Symposium on the Environment Award Winners

### Regional Students Shine in Annual Student Symposium on the Environment

The 10th Annual Student Symposium on the Environment was held on December 7th at Westminster College. **Shaun Busler, Cliff Denholm, Margaret Dunn, Vicki Michaels, Wil Taylor, Brandi Miller, Kirk Brethauer, Charlie Cooper, and Becky Lubold** from the Slippery Rock Watershed Coalition were on hand to take in the evening's student presentations and creative works on environmental topics. This year, approximately 75 students from 11 regional colleges, universities, and high schools gave oral presentations and provided poster displays on a variety of environmental research subjects.

Dozens of professionals, educators and watershed organizations came to the McKelvey Campus Center to support the showcasing of some amazing student work. Some of the topics included small mammal presence and abundance at Jennings Environmental Education Center, coffee and humans (an ecology of the consumer), annual precipitation and its effects on the growth of sugar maple trees, student construction of a spectrophotometer, the impact of environmental exposure on trace metals in human hair, DCNR invasive species initiative, natural dyes and textile art, the effect of size and age of ash trees on the selectivity of the emerald ash borer, and many more!

Special thanks go out to the symposium judges, the oral session moderator (Audrey Nickle), symposium organizers **Dr. Helen Boylan** and **Tauni Caylor**, many student volunteers, and to Stream Restoration Inc. for sponsoring the awards. The students did an impressive job showcasing their research and many excellent projects! Congratulations to all of the award winners!

Best Environmental Project: **Anna Cowie** (Winner) and **Samantha Laurence** (Honorable Mention)  
 Best Research Poster: **Shadrack Ampomah** (Winner) and **Grant Gagnon** (Honorable Mention)  
 Best High School Project: **Dalton Fussnecker** (Winner) and **Jonathan Micsky, Brianna Pennington, Caylee Jayne, Kyle Wingard** (Honorable Mention)  
 Best Oral Presentation: **Sydney Tomechko** (Winner) and **Tyler Hunt** (Honorable Mention)





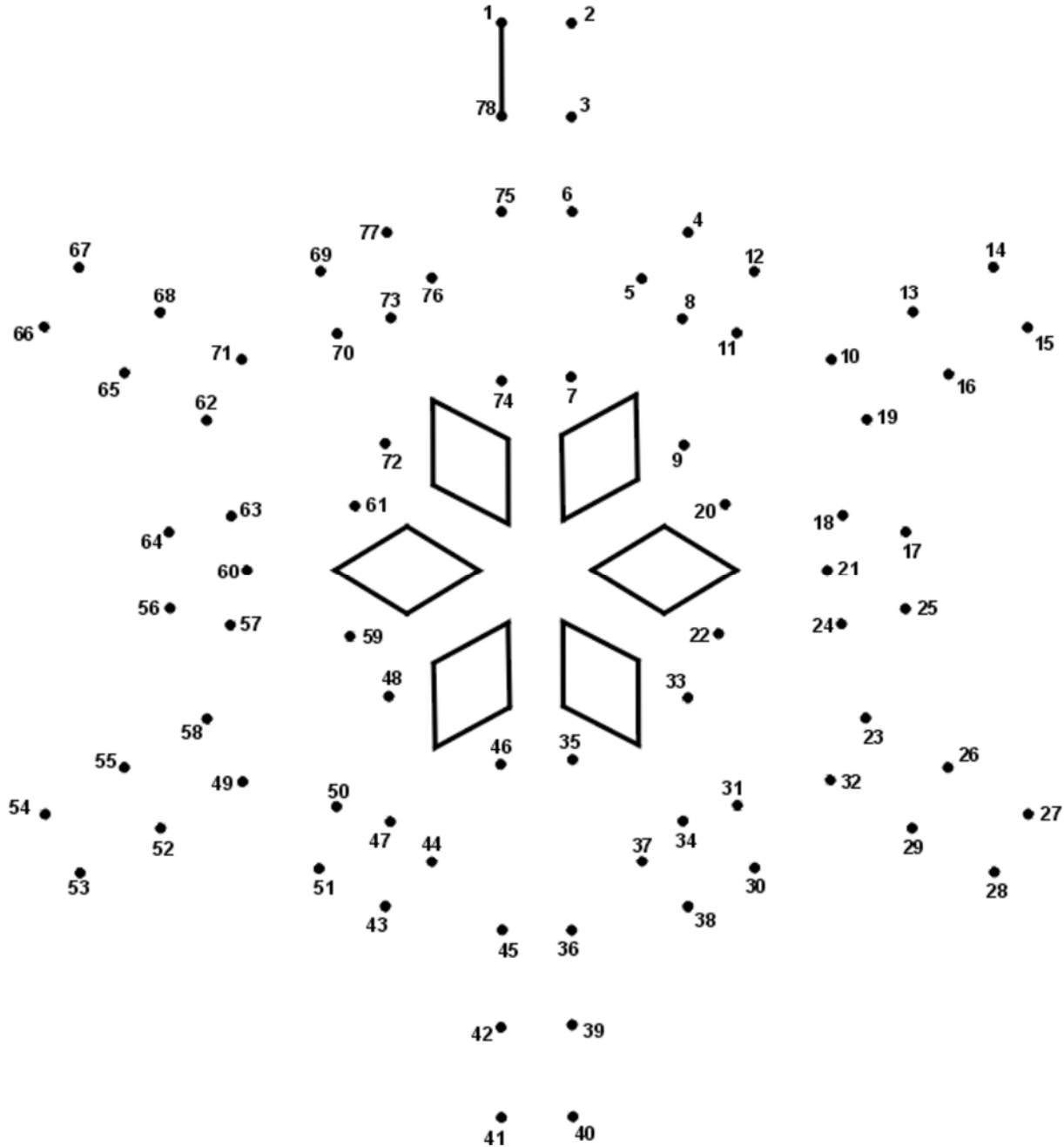
# The KIDS Catalyst

## SLIPPERY ROCK WATERSHED COALITION FUN ACTIVITY



### Connect-the-Dots Snowflake Fun

With winter just about here, it's time to think about fun in the snow! Soon those big white snowflakes will be falling from the sky! Did you know no 2 snowflakes are alike? They each get a unique shape as they fall from cloud to ground, influenced by things like wind, temperature, humidity, bumping into each other and to other particles in the atmosphere, etc. A man named Wilson "Snowflake" Bentley photographed over 5000 snowflakes by catching them on black velvet — no 2 ever the same. There are now 35 basic snowflake shapes, or categories, identified by scientists. If you connect the dots below, 1 to 78, you will create your own snowflake picture! If you send us your paper we will email a \$1 credit for Amazon to you via a parent's email address. Credits can be saved up to buy something extra special. We hope you have a fun winter!



Name \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_ Parent email \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_



Slippery Rock Watershed Coalition c/o Stream Restoration Incorporated  
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