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For Immediate Release

**Groups Complete Permanent Protection of 76 Acres near
Schwenksville, PA in Montgomery County**

*Valley Forge Audubon Society, Montgomery County Lands Trust and Natural
Lands Trust work together to safeguard 76 acres of pristine woodland.*

December 2, 2004 Lederach, PA – The Eva R. Meng Wildlife Preserve and Bird Sanctuary gained permanent protection December 1, 2004. The 76-acre natural woodland will be safeguarded from development by a land protection agreement held and monitored by Montgomery County Lands Trust with Natural Lands Trust acting as a back-up agency.

Valley Forge Audubon Society, a local chapter of the National Audubon Society, received the land in 1997 as a bequest from the estate of Eva R. Meng, who with her sister Edna, ran a Girl Scout camp called Camp Ivy for nearly 40 years. Eva and Edna were nature lovers who valued this special piece of ground where over 60 bird species and a diverse range of other animals, plant life, and fungus have been identified.

Valley Forge Audubon has spent over seven years building trails and hosting walks at the sanctuary, free and open to the public. Valley Forge Board President Ralf

Graves says, “Now, in cooperation with Montgomery County Lands Trust, we are able to ensure that the wishes of Ms. Meng to preserve the land for nature will be permanently honored. Valley Forge Audubon is delighted to accomplish this through collaboration with an organization with which we have a longstanding and mutually supportive relationship.”

Working closely with Jake Lea, Director of Land Preservation for Montgomery County Lands Trust, Drew Gilchrist brought valuable technical expertise to the project. Mr. Gilchrist, who serves on the Valley Forge Audubon Society board of directors, works professionally as the Assistant Director of Land Protection for Natural Lands Trust. As the back-up agency, Natural Lands Trust will assure that the terms of the easement are followed.

The 76 safeguarded acres combine with another 23 acres of land previously protected through the Montgomery County Open Space program with covenants and deed restrictions, bringing the total preserved acreage of this natural wooded landscape to 99 acres. The sanctuary has more than two miles of public trails connecting to open space owned by Lower Frederick and Limerick Townships as well as to Pennsylvania State Gamelands #234. At present, over 600 acres can be accessed by way of Meng and the Stone Hill Greenway. Montgomery County Lands Trust and Natural Lands Trust applaud Valley Forge Audubon for taking this important step to ensure that the land entrusted to them by the Meng estate will remain forever free from development.

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--- Montgomery County Lands Trust and Natural Lands Trust