



Juniata Valley Audubon

According to the Chapter bylaws, our annual banquet on April 20th marked the beginning of the terms for all four newly elected officers. I'm grateful to Warren Baker, Alice Kotala, and Laura Jackson for agreeing to serve with me as treasurer, secretary, and vice-president, respectively. I also would like to thank our outgoing president, Terry Wentz, for his service and all he was able to accomplish before illness forced him to step back from active involvement in the group. I ask everyone to keep him in their thoughts and prayers.

I'd like to take this opportunity to remind everyone that the Juniata Valley Audubon Society is a volunteer, grassroots organization, and we're always looking for new people to fill existing roles that may be vacant — at the moment, we're looking for a Field Trips Committee chair and a Hospitality Committee chair — as well as to assume new roles of their own devising if they happen to dovetail with the club's philosophy and goals. If there's a local, regional, national, or international conservation issue you feel we should be more active on, we invite you to become our point-person on the issue. If you're new to environmental activism, our veteran activists will be happy to share from their knowledge and experience to help you get started. We'd also like to get more people involved on a casual or part-time basis in some of the things we already do. Volunteer to lead a field trip to an area you know (and don't worry if you're not an expert on birds or wildflowers; I'm very much still a learner myself). Sign up to provide refreshments at one of our program meetings. Write a letter-to-the-editor of one of the local newspapers. Join the JVAS fan page on Facebook and share the updates with your friends. Bring a friend along to a meeting or a JVAS outing.

Juniata Valley Audubon is the premier nature club in our area, and I don't have any plans for a radical change of course. While many other state and national environmental organizations have adapted their messages to the changing winds of politics, the JVAS has remained committed to wildlife conservation, habitat, and nature education. As an independently chartered organization, we have the freedom to say and do what we like as long as it doesn't endanger our nonprofit status. National Audubon provides direction and inspiration, but cannot force us to tone down our rhetoric or soft-pedal certain issues on which environmentalists might be divided, such as habitat-destroying industrial wind installations or unnatural gas developments. These are challenging times, in which our so-called leaders often present us with the false choice of economic health or environmental health, while doing everything they can to support a system that is destroying both. Now more than ever, environmentalists need to find the courage to speak out in defense of nature and say things that nobody else is willing to say. As president, I intend to make sure that the JVAS continues to act as the environmental conscience of central Pennsylvania. I hope you'll join me.

Dave Bonta
Earth Day (April 22, 2010)