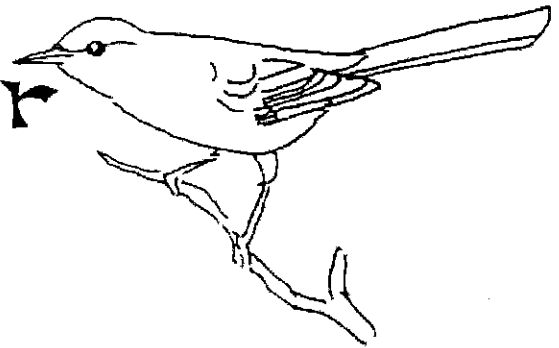


The Gnatcatcher



Newsletter of the Juniata Valley Audubon Society

P.O. Box 32, Tyrone, Pennsylvania 16686

Vol. 32, No. 3 – May/June 2000

Jody Wallace Receives 2000 JVAS Conservation Award

At the annual banquet of the Juniata Valley Audubon Society, held April 25 at the Trinity United Methodist Church, in Bellwood, Jody Wallace received the JVAS Conservation Award for the year 2000. Jody, a resident of Sinking Valley, merits the award because she:

- coordinated the Sinking Run Restoration Project;
- is a leader of Environmental Education for Girl Scout Troop 1215;
- has dedicated countless hours to the JVAS as an environmental education volunteer;

[*Cont'd on page 3*]



Conservation Chair Sarah J. Miller presents Jody Wallace with the JVAS 2000 Conservation Award at the society's annual spring banquet.

– May Program –

"SPIN FISHING FOR TROUT." Frank Nale, of Tipton, will give a slide show/talk on "fishing with a lure called a spinner." Frank's program will cover equipment and tactics, stream selection, and why he enjoys fishing for reasons other than just to catch trout. For those not interested in spin fishing per se, the program will offer a chance to learn about the fantastic wild trout resource and the unequalled wild trout streams in central Pennsylvania. Interspersed in the program are photos of beautiful scenery, wildflowers, and wildlife.

7 P.M., Tuesday, May 16 in the Visitor Center at Canoe Creek State Park.

– May Field Trip –

RAMBLING THROUGH THE DETWEILER RUN NATURAL AREA.

Come join Shirley Wagoner as she leads a walk in the Detweiler Run Natural Area, a 463-acre patch of Pennsylvania forest primeval in a deep ravine between Thickhead and Grass Mountains in Huntingdon County. The area is dominated by old-growth hemlock, white pine, and white oak. Meet in the parking lot of Kish Bank on Rt. 26 in McAlevy's Fort at 8:30 A.M. The walk will end around noon. Bring sturdy footwear. Trip leader: JVAS Education Chair Shirley Wagoner (phone 643-4011).

8:30 A.M., Saturday, May 20

– June Picnic –

A season-ending, covered-dish picnic will be held at Pavilion No. 2 in Canoe Creek State Park. Fellowship and a wildflower walk guided by JVAS Secretary Eugene Zielinski will highlight the evening. Please phone Marge Hoyer at 684-7376 or send an e-mail message to her at <charma@nb.net> and let her know what you're bringing.

6 P.M., Tuesday, June 20

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JUNIATA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY

Charlie Hoyer, Editor

P.O. Box 32

Tyrone, PA 16686-0032

The Juniata Valley Audubon Society (JVAS) is a chapter of the National Audubon Society serving members in Bedford, Blair, Fulton, Huntingdon, and Mifflin Counties.

Program meetings of the JVAS are held in the Visitor Center at Canoe Creek State Park, near Hollidaysburg, on the third Tuesday of the month in February, March, May, September, October, and November at 7:30 P.M. (A business meeting is at 7 o'clock.) The public is invited to attend.

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From the Gnatcatcher's Nest

To those of you who have not yet met your new JVAS president, I'd like to introduce myself. Along with Marge, my wife of 35 years, I live on Brush Mountain near Skelp — neighbors of the Bontas. I'm a retired technical writer, having worked 11 years for Burroughs Corporation and 17 years for Univac. (Both computer companies since have merged to form Unisys.)

I've been a member of the National Audubon Society since 1968 and, through the years, have been a member of the Valley Forge Chapter, the Northeast Pa. Chapter, and since 1992 the Juniata Valley Chapter. I've been a member of the American Ornithologists' Union since 1984 and the Association of Field Ornithologists since 1997. I serve as the Blair County compiler for the Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology and for the North American Migration Counts.

Presently, I'm the club secretary for the Rotary Club of Tyrone, a board member of the Tyrone Area Historical Society, and a member of the Friends of Sinking Valley committee.

My activities in the past mainly were Pennsylvania state commissioner for Babe Ruth Baseball (20 years), scholastic baseball umpire (PIAA), and youth ice hockey referee (AHAUS). In between these activities I managed to fit some hiking, boating, and fishing.

During the coming months I shall endeavor to stimulate those of the JVAS membership who have not attended any of our excellent program meetings or who have yet to join our expert guides on a field trip. Vacations are starting now; however, commencing in September I shall entice you to take advantage of your National Audubon Society membership and make the most of the Juniata Valley Chapter's activities.

It gives me great pleasure to announce that Cindy Moore, of Altoona, is the new vice-president for the JVAS. And we're all viewing her as president-elect! She and her husband Luis have been very active members of the JVAS and appear to enjoy its activities very much. They've been involved with the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Project FeederWatch and recently became members of the Shaver's Creek Environmental Center.

Cindy hails from a small town in Indiana and has lived in Blair County for 10 years. She enjoys hiking with her husband (and with the family dog) in state parks and state game lands in the area. Cindy says that she's excited and honored to be a part of the JVAS and hopes to learn a lot more about the JVAS and all the wonders that nature has to offer.

Finally, the JVAS certainly is very fortunate to have Sarah J. Miller continuing as its Conservation Chair. As past president Terry Wentz once said, "The JVAS will become an influential organization when we all team together to support conservation and education issues." Sarah is a leader, but she clearly needs your support.

Charlie Hoyer

CONSERVATION
CORNER
By Sarah Miller
**A Peaceful Protest
To Bobcat Hunting**

The other night I was complaining to my husband Gary about the Pennsylvania Game Commission's decision to allow hunting and trapping of bobcats in the state for the first time in thirty years. While I'm not adverse to hunting, I'm opposed to the categorization of any native carnivore as a game species. I also loathe the "sport" of trapping. This method is downright inhumane as it results in a slow, agonizing death.

Unlike deer, bobcat populations have not outgrown their habitat. Bobcats neither pose a threat to farmers' crops nor do any damage to our forests. Their pelts don't yield enough money to support a trapper. I have to ask then, why does the Commission feel the need to manage this species? I believe the answer is that they're simply trying to appease a very small minority of Pennsylvania "sportsmen" who trap purely for recreation or as a hobby.

The bobcat is the only feline predator left in Pennsylvania. Recent estimates by the Game Commission place its population at 3,500. While these numbers may not seem low at first, they do when you remember that it took thirty years to get to this point. To add insult to injury, the Commission also is requesting that the federal government allow bobcat pelts to be sold on an international market. Creating a lucrative market abroad for these furs will undoubtedly result in the increase of poaching activities. Yes, there are 3,500 cats now, but how long will it take to once again decimate the population if, for instance, bobcat-fur coats become the rage in Europe?

Despite letters to the Game Commission and the local paper in protest of the season, it looks like the hunt will go on. So what can someone opposed to this hunt do? My husband has a brilliant idea. What if those who are against hunting bobcats apply for a hunting/trapping permit and then rip it up in a

form of peaceful protest? Hunters have done this for years as a way to protest doe hunting, and I have to believe that there are more people out there who oppose bobcat hunting than hunters wishing to purchase a permit.

To do this, you'll need to purchase a hunting license to be eligible to apply for a permit. If you've never obtained a hunting license, you'll need to complete a hunter-safety course. Hunting licenses go for roughly \$20, but some of this money goes to the purchase of hunting land, so you would be protecting open space to boot.

Approximately 300 bobcat permits will be awarded by a lottery; therefore, one isn't guaranteed a permit when he or she purchases a hunting license. Perhaps you know some hunters who would apply for a bobcat permit and, if awarded one, not use it. If we could get enough concerned citizens across the state to participate, I believe we could make a substantial dent in the number of bobcats that would be taken.

Think about it...the season opens October 14! ❖

❖ ❖ ❖

... Conservation Award [*Cont'd from first page*]

- taught the JVAS Summer Nature Camp at Penn-Mont Academy in 1998;
- assists Dr. Stan Kotala in teaching the JVAS-sponsored "Stream Class" to school students; and
- is the Environmental Education Coordinator at Fort Roberdeau.

Last year she co-founded the community-based, grassroots organization called "Friends of Sinking Valley," which was formed to address land-use planning issues in Tyrone Township. Jody has been very active in building relationships with local-agency personnel and nonprofit groups and applying for grants from Pennsylvania's Department of Environmental Protection and Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.

And on top of all this she, along with hubby Mark Shields, is raising three wonderful children! ❖

Monarch Watch Volunteers Needed

Monarch Watch is a research program of the University of Kansas that gathers information on the size of the monarch butterfly population through a tagging project carried out by volunteers.

Volunteers receive a sheet of adhesive tags that they place on the wings of monarch butterflies they capture during August and September. The number of tags recovered on the wintering grounds in Mexico give researchers an approximation of the total population size. Last year's recoveries led to a population estimate of 3000 million monarchs in the eastern U.S.

Monarch Watch volunteers also receive a newsletter listing recoveries and is filled with informative articles about these fascinating butterflies. If you are interested in helping, please contact Monarch Watch at <monarch@ukans.edu> or

Monarch Watch
c/o O.R. Taylor
Department of Entomology
Haworth Hall
University of Kansas
Lawrence, KS 66045

— Dr. Stan Kotala



Canoe Creek State Park naturalist Kerry Estright-Pruznak trains Monarch Watch volunteers at Canoe Creek State Park.

Don't forget to send your BiLo Foods and
Riverside Markets cash register tapes to
Anne Borland at 138A Larch St., Hollidaysburg, PA 16648.
Anne redeems the tapes for \$\$\$ for the JVAS.

Nesting Acadian Flycatchers

As we led a Juniata Valley Audubon Society Forest Stewardship walk up our hollow road in May of 1994, JVAS President Stan Kotala suddenly said, "Sounds like you have an Acadian flycatcher here." We paused to listen to what I had always assumed was the warning call of a songbird. Instead, the sharp explosive "pit-see" was the "song" of one of the five, hard-to-identify, look-alike Empidonax flycatchers.

A couple years previously, our son Mark had spotted an Acadian flycatcher during migration time sitting in a hemlock tree beside the road.

"Keep a watch out for breeding Acadian flycatchers," he had told me.

I remembered his words as we continued our JVAS walk and heard Acadian flycatchers singing not only near our hollow road, but along the Black Gum Trail that penetrates the upper part of the hollow on Laurel Ridge. A couple days later I also heard several singing near First Field Trail.

All the areas are maturing deciduous forests — a preferred habitat for Acadian flycatchers. The hollow area could also be described as a ravine and has abundant beech trees — two other habitat preferences of Acadian flycatchers. The area near the First Field Trail qualifies as a swampy woods — still another favorite breeding locality for the birds.

Although Stan had made me acutely aware of the abundance of singing Acadian flycatchers on our property throughout the spring and early summer months, I could not definitely prove that they were breeding here in 1994. This year, however, I was luckier.

On June 12 I was walking up the hollow road in midday. Just below the big turn-out (about a quarter mile from the bottom of the mountain), an Acadian flycatcher began scolding me. I followed her with

my binoculars until she gave away her nest site — the tip of a beech tree branch overhanging the road about ten feet from the ground.

Her nest habitat exactly suited the description in the *Atlas of Breeding Birds in Pennsylvania*, which says, ". . . inhabits woodlands near streams, where it frequently builds in the pendant branches of a beech."

Furthermore, "in the northern counties the bird often is found in narrow valleys with hemlock-lined streams. . . ." and frequently associates "with the Louisiana waterthrush and, in the north, sometimes in the same valleys as winter wrens." Certainly, our hollow has had breeding Louisiana waterthrushes for as long as we have lived here, and back in 1993 we had breeding winter wrens as well.

Unfortunately, I could not observe nesting behavior because first we had to attend our son Mark's wedding in Honduras and then I caught a nasty flu that lasted a couple weeks. But Stan did ask me to collect the nest after the birds had fledged for the Fort Roberdeau Nature Center's nest collection he was assembling.

Knowing that Acadian flycatchers incubate only one brood for 13-14 days and that they then fledge in 13-15 days, I asked our tallest son, Steve, to stand up in our truck bed and retrieve the nest on July 5. Instead, he found two fluffy youngsters still in the nest and a very unhappy mother. So we waited until July 23 when David and Bruce carefully pruned the limb holding the nest and brought it home to me.

The cup-shaped nest had been woven of bare hemlock twigs and catkins and bound with spider webs, a seemingly flimsy construction that I could see through. Yet it was strong enough to cradle the eggs and young of the first confirmed breeding Acadian flycatcher in Blair County. ❖

By Marcia Bonta

Due to a combination of reasons, including medical problems, Marcia was unable to provide her column for this issue. The above is a reprint from a previous issue that you may have missed.

— Ed.

Women's Expedition for the Environment

Join the Women's Expedition for the Environment for its third annual journey — this year focusing on northwestern Pennsylvania. A three-day canoe trek on French Creek, one of Pennsylvania's most diverse waterways, will be followed by a three-day backpack on the North Country Trail.

Learn about the cultural and natural history of northwestern Pennsylvania as you paddle and walk these pathways. Each day brings new delights, as

you meet with experts on a diverse array of topics, explore areas only reached by human-power, and share and grow in a safe environment.

The event takes place June 12–17, 2000, beginning at Cambridge Springs and ending at McConnell's Mill State Park.

For registration information, please phone Marci Mowery at (717) 213-6880 or send an e-mail message to her at <mmowery@audubon.org>. ❖

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