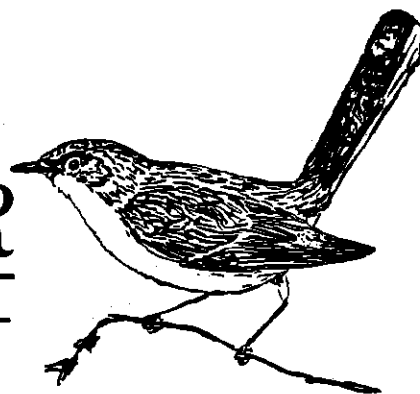


THE GNATCATCHER

Juniata Valley Audubon Society

May 1986



Billy Bee

Our meeting on Tuesday, May 27, should be really special. Billy Bee, an environmental musician from Baltimore, will present a selection of songs for all ages. Several of our board members heard him last year at a PAC meeting, and they report that he really is a lot of fun.

This should be a good way to top off a great year for JVAS. Join us at the 28th St. Church of the Brethren at 7:30.

Billy Bee will also present programs on May 27 at schools in Bellwood, Hollidaysburg, and Tyrone.

Annual Picnic

Our annual picnic will be held at Canoe Creek State Park on Sunday, June 22, beginning at 1:00 at Pavillion 2 (swimming side of park). Because we're using the pavillion, the picnic will be held rain or shine. Activities will include swimming, canoeing, and games. The park naturalist will lead a hike before the meal, which will be served at suppertime. JVAS will provide charcoal for the grills. Please bring your own meat, rolls, and one covered dish. Further details will be announced at the May meeting, or call Bob Keppler at 695-0742.

Lost. And Found?

Please check your bookshelves for Colette Heller's Hummingbirds and Paula Ford's Baybook. It's nice to share books; it's also nice to get them back! Thanks.

Help Wanted

This has been one of the busiest years JVAS ever had, but you'd never know it if you looked at our scrapbook. Historian Truth Close asks that you share with the chapter any pictures you may have of our field trips, meetings, or other activities. Please bring them to the next meeting or call Truth at 942-7886. Thanks.

Billboard News

State Representative Ed Johnson recently sent me a copy of a letter he wrote to Secretary of Transportation, Dr. Thomas Larson. Here's the text of his letter:

"Many of my constituents are concerned about the proliferation of billboards along the beautiful new highways, which you and your department have built in Blair County.

The Audubon Society has suggested that we use informational signs with logos at exits, such as those used in Maryland and Virginia.

I would appreciate your consideration of this meritorious suggestion."

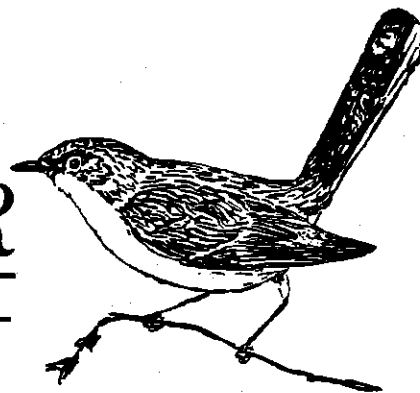
We thank Rep. Johnson for his support.

See the enclosed billboard fact sheet for more information about billboards and how you can help keep our highways beautiful--naturally.

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FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

Marcia Bonta

OPT-A-PUFFIN--One of our members, Jesse Perry, donated half the amount needed to adopt a puffin so the board voted overwhelmingly to name our puffin "Perry," or possibly "Perri," if it's a girl. After all, could there be a better name than Perry(i) Puffin!

BANQUET--Our banquet was a great success due to a variety of factors. First and foremost, there was the hard work of Colette Heller and her committee members-- Truth Close, Doris Thurheimer, Glenn Mock, Ann Borland, and Dick and Nona Weicht. The Weights' made particularly attractive programs and Mary Burgoon gave a very appropriate inter-denominational blessing before an outstanding meal prepared by the Bellwood United Methodist Church. Finally, our program on South African wildlife by Dr. David Pearson of PSU featured superb slides of one of the most beautiful natural areas in the world. A special thanks to those people who worked so hard to ensure a memorable night for all who attended!

BLACK MOSHANNON WARBLER WALK--The 15 stalwart, early-risers who joined expert birder and fellow member Dave Kyler on this field trip learned a lot about birds and bird song identifying 62 species including 16 species of warblers such as the hooded, blue-winged, Canada, Blackburnian and chestnut-sided plus an osprey and a white-crowned sparrow.

ATLAS PROJECT--Dave is also co-ordinator for the Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas Project in Blair and Huntingdon counties and could use more participants since parts of both counties still need coverage. To find out more about how you can help call him at 643-6030.

WPC FIELD TRIP--On September 20, 1986 JVAS and members of the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy will have a joint field trip to Tytoona Cave Natural Area and Arch Spring under the leadership of Paul Weigman. Participation is limited to 30 WPC members and 30 JVAS members. Since this trip will occur before our September meeting, we will be signing up JVAS members with a \$5.00 deposit at the May meeting on a first-come, first-serve basis. If those who have signed up do attend their deposit will be refunded. After the May meeting, send your name and money to treasurer Janet Neely, 8 S. Montgomery Street, Hollidaysburg, 16648 to reserve a place.

BIG DAY--Mark and I had our Big Day birding on Mother's Day and equaled our 1984 record of 65 species on the mountain. Mark was rewarded for getting up at 5:00 a.m. by seeing a red fox close-up in addition to having 40 bird species by 9:00 when I set out with him for a walk down the hollow. At dusk on our last walk of the day (he walked 9 miles; I walked 5) a skunk crossed the trail in front of us. It was a day for courting rose-breasted grosbeaks, a male scarlet tanager with an orange back and an orange and yellow belly (my second sighting of this variant this year), and the return of the eastern pewees and least flycatchers. Except for our nesting warbler species, warblers were scarce although we did turn up black-and white, black-throated green and blues, golden-winged, yellow, Cape May, yellow-rumped and Blackburnian warblers. If you participated in Big Day be sure to give your list to Angeline Stout at 1005 Park Drive, Altoona, Pa. 16602.

HAVE A GOOD SUMMER--Even if you don't travel anywhere, some of your best nature experiences can occur in your own backyard, a nearby woodlot or farmer's field or at Canoe Creek State Park, Fort Roberdeau Nature Center, or Glendale. We are lucky that we have so much so near. I'm looking forward to seeing my annual June black bear, picking wild berries, and finding nesting birds for the Breeding Bird Atlas. There is still more to learn than we have time for in our short lives because, in the words of the great French entomologist Henri Fabre, "Life has unfathomable secrets. Human knowledge will be erased from the archives of the world before we possess the last word that the Gnat has to say to us." So get out often and listen to the Gnat. You may learn more than you bargained for!

Education Committee News
by Wendy Reimold

Congratulations to Jean Sinal, who was selected to receive this year's Audubon Ecology Camp Scholarship. Jean is active on the education committee, serves on the speakers' bureau, and has worked at the Envir-Olympics, Naturefest, and wherever else needed. She and Dan both plan to attend the "Introductory Field Ecology for Educators" camp in Connecticut. Congratulations to a deserving candidate.

The first annual Envir-Olympics, held at Canoe Creek State Park, was a huge success. JVAS and the Blair Conservation District sponsored this contest for high school students on April 24. Thirty students from four school districts competed by answering practical questions related to the natural environment. JVAS had a great station which included quizzing the students on bird and egg identification, ecosystems, various forms of pollution, and the bottle fill. Teams from the Altoona Area Voc-Tech School took first and third place, while Bellwood won second. The winning team will advance to the state competition at Shaver's Creek in June. Thanks to all the Audubon members who helped out: Melvin Lane, Bob Keppler, Dan and Jean Sinal, Glen Mock, Tom McMann, John Lennox, Terry Wentz, and Wendy Reimold. Our questions were written by Laura Jackson, Paula Ford, John Lennox, and Fran Burgoon.

Thanks to Fran Burgoon for setting up and manning a display called "Our Birds" at the Spade and Trowel Garden Club's flower show in Hollidaysburg. The display won an Award of Appreciation and a first place ribbon in the educational category. JVAS member Tom McMann showed his bluebird slides and wildflower slides provided by Canoe Creek State Park. Anne Borland and Bernetta Hill won awards for their flower displays.

Strickler's Pond Update

JVAS recently received a letter from Nancy Edmundson, the Huntingdon woman who led the fight to save Strickler's Pond. She thanked us for our support of her efforts, and she reported that the final decision is as follows: The main pond will not be disturbed. A special wall will be constructed. The small pond will be filled and the turtles in it will be moved to a man-made area.

Bluebird Monitors Meet

Fran Burgoon, Gene Root, and Jean and Dan Sinal attended a meeting of bluebird trail monitors from state parks across Pennsylvania. Held at Bald Eagle State Park on May 3, the meeting covered topics such as an update on data gathered during the 1985 nesting season, a discussion and demonstration of bird banding, and the Bluebird Trail Monitor of the Year Award.

Here's a comparison of some data:

	<u>1981</u>	<u>1985</u>
parks with trails	11	48
total boxes	337	1474
boxes used		
by bluebirds	47	332
bluebirds fledged	96	1385
boxes used by		
other species	117	892

The program has been a great success, thanks to the dedication of both state parks' staff and volunteers. All of us who enjoy seeing the bluebirds owe them a big thank you.

Speaking of bluebirds and volunteers, Fran Burgoon reports that Beryl Sternagle has joined the Canoe Creek bluebird volunteers. If you'd also enjoy helping to monitor the trail, contact Fran at 695-5857.

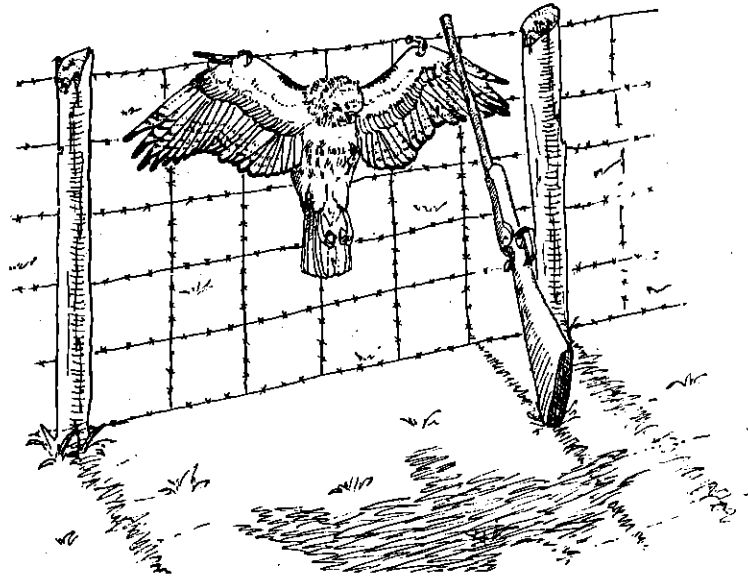
BIRDS OF PREY AND SMALL GAME:
FIRST ANNOUNCEMENT FOR A
CONFERENCE AT HAWK MOUNTAIN

There is much talk these days about the decline of rabbit and pheasant populations in Pennsylvania. Some people are blaming birds of prey for the declines, and there is even talk of the need to "control" raptor populations. What are the facts? Are populations of great horned owls and red-tailed hawks increasing? Are small game populations declining? Are raptors responsible? What about such other factors as agricultural practices?

These topics and questions will be the focus of a conference, "Birds-of-Prey Populations and Predation on Small Game in Pennsylvania," to be held at Hawk Mountain Sanctuary on 6 September 1986. Among the guests who have agreed to participate is Peter S. Duncan, Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Game Commission. He will discuss the Commission's policy and program on birds of prey. Other guests will discuss principles of predator-prey ecology, small game and agriculture, laws protecting birds of prey, and what individuals and Audubon chapters can do to help.

The conference will meet in the Common Room at Hawk Mountain Sanctuary on Saturday, 6 September--the start of the broad-winged hawk migration season. Registration will begin at 8:30 a.m. and the program will end at about 3:30 p.m. There will also be a barbeque and an evening lecture for those who wish to stay. Dr. Richard Clark of York College will be the guest for the evening lecture, which will begin at 8:00 p.m. His illustrated program will be on great horned owls in Pennsylvania.

Plan to spend the day and the night at Hawk Mountain. Camping facilities or motels are available nearby.



Please use the coupon below to request full program details (to be sent when they are available). The number of participants will be limited, so if you are interested, please let us know. A modest registration fee will be charged.

This conference is being cosponsored by the Hawk Mountain Sanctuary Association and the National Audubon Society, Mid-Atlantic Regional Office.

(Clip here)

Yes, I am interested. Please send me the details.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zipcode _____

Return coupon to:

Birds of Prey/Small Game Conference
Hawk Mountain Sanctuary Association
Rte. 2, Kempton, PA 19529

Conservation News
by Paula Ford

The Conservation Committee continues to be busy with both local and national issues.

On the local front, we're cosponsoring the petition to have the Bell's Gap watershed designated unsuitable for surface mining.

We're also trying to keep billboards off our new routes 22 and 220. Steve Parks has been in almost constant contact with the Coalition for Scenic Beauty. That group will have an article about JVAS's efforts in the next issue of its newsletter, Sign Control News. I took pictures of both good and bad local vistas for the article.

The bottle bill remains bogged down in committee. Please watch the paper over the summer, and if the bill comes up for a vote, please write to your state representative. Those of

you who live in the Altoona district should make sure you write to Rep. Geist, because he has not supported the bottle bill. Reps. Hayes and Johnson have.

On the national front, we recently received word that because of the efforts of one Virginia congressman, the Department of the Interior ordered the Refuge Manager at Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge to construct a new 100-car parking lot at the refuge. I had to quickly write letters to the Secretary of the Interior, our Senators, and various other officials to try to convince them that this was not a good idea. This was a case where time was so limited that only conservation chairmen received the action alert. I'll have details at the meeting.

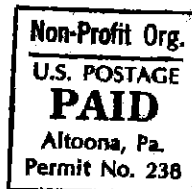
See You in September

The Gnatcatcher and its editor will be on vacation during the summer. Have a good one!

JUNIATA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY

P. O. Box 2378

Altoona, PA 16603



**DATED
MATERIAL**