

THE GNATCATCHER

Juniata Valley Audubon Society

Sept. 1986



Tytoona Cave

JVAS is off to a good start for a great year. Our first meeting of the 1986-87 season will be held on Sept. 30 at 7:30 at the 28th St. Church of the Brethren.

Jim Faix and Bill Miller, both members of the 50 Below Club and the National Speleological Society's Cave Diving Section will describe their dive at Tytoona Cave, show slides, and display their caving equipment.

For those of us who don't dive in caves, this may well be our only chance to see the soda-straw stalactites and other unique geologic features of Tytoona Cave.

Workshop/Field Trip

Our field trip season will begin on Sept. 19 with a 7:30 p.m. workshop on waterfowl identification conducted by Dave Kyler at the Science II Building at Penn State's Altoona Campus.

On Sept. 20 we'll travel to Shawnee State Park to observe waterfowl in the field. Leave the Pleasant Valley Shopping Center at 7:00 a.m. Bring a bag lunch, and wear boots or shoes suitable for wet terrain. Contact Dave Kyler at 643-6030 for more information about both activities. You can attend the workshop without attending the field trip and vice versa.

Naturefest

Once again JVAS is cosponsoring the Naturefest at Ft. Roberdeau on Sept. 21. This is a fun event for the whole family. Contact Peggy Goodman (942-5763) for details or to volunteer to help.

Mark Your Calendars

Oct. 4--Hawk spotting at Tussey Mt. Fire Tower. Leave PVSC at 8:00. Bring lunch. Contact Dave Kyler.

Oct. 11--Fern identification workshop at PSU, Altoona, 9:00 a.m. Dr. Jim Winsor and Dr. John Lennox will explain structure, identification, and preservation of fern and club moss species. A short field trip will be included. Bring lunch and wear shoes suitable for rough and wet terrain. Contact J. Lennox 946-1584.

Thumbs Up/Thumbs Down

At its monthly meeting on Sept. 4, the JVAS Conservation Committee decided to begin giving monthly recognition to those who help or harm the environment. These awards will be for the little things that are too often overlooked. We'll still give our annual conservation award for outstanding environmental action. You can help by letting Paula Ford or Steve Parks, Co-Chairs of the Conservation Committee know who deserves a thumbs up or a thumbs down. Thanks.

Early Gnatcatcher

This has been one of the busiest summers ever for JVAS. The Kreitzes, the Bontas, and the Ford and Camerons all attended the Mid Atlantic Regional Conference in St. Mary's City, MD, this summer. The Mid Atlantic Regional Office negotiated a landmark agreement with Jules Patt to develop the Historic Smithville site near Brigantine, and Tom Troy resigned as our regional representative. Full details will be in the October Gnatcatcher. This one is early so you won't miss those great fieldtrips.

JUNIATA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY ANNUAL REPORT 1985-1986

Last year the Juniata Valley Audubon Society was extremely active, taking on an incredibly wide diversity of projects. Many of our members participated in at least one activity although we did not get 100% participation since our membership roll now fluctuates around the 350 mark.

A large portion of our funding consists of dues-sharing received from the National Audubon Society. The only other fund-raiser we have is the Bird Seed Sale. Unfortunately both of these sources of revenue have not been strong enough to support the level of activities we have undertaken and so we will have to scale back our work next year unless we receive more monetary support from our members and have a stronger Bird Seed Sale.

Every year I have to file an Annual Chapter Certification Report Form with the National Audubon Society explaining all our activities so that they will renew our charter. Every year that report is more impressive--far in excess of what NAS requires an affiliate chapter to do.

REGULAR ACTIVITIES

First of all we engaged in what I call our regular activities. We had excellent monthly program meetings including entertainment by nationally-prominent, folk singer Billy Bee and a variety of nature and/or conservation-related programs featuring outstanding speakers and slide presentations--some of these by our own members. Our members also actively participated in nature and conservation displays before each meeting on such subjects as birds' nests, the Chesapeake Bay, water quality in local springs, Indian artifacts, rocks and minerals, shells, black bear studies in Pennsylvania, and bluebird trails.

Our monthly field trips to places like Black Moshannon State Park, Wagoner's Gap, Middle Creek Management Area, and Fallingwater were exciting as were our special field trips for children--the Fossil Walk for Kids and the Animals in Winter at Shaver's Creek Environmental Center. Both our Annual Banquet and Annual Picnic were unusually successful because of the place as well as the activities. At the banquet Dr. David Pearson's talk and slides on the natural life of South Africa was outstanding, so was the food provided by the Bellwood United Methodist Church. The new pavilion at Canoe Creek State Park provided a beautiful setting for our picnic and the naturalist-led walk added to our understanding of the park's natural and cultural setting.

Finally our monthly newsletter The Gnatcatcher has been greatly expanded and improved with more contributions from members. In addition, our mailing list has been computerized.

EDUCATION

Most of our education efforts have been orchestrated by members of our Education Committee although sometimes other members do contribute, especially at the annual Naturefest at ~~Fort~~ Roberdeau and in providing leaders for elementary school nature walks at the Fort Roberdeau Nature Center.

The major programs of the committee last year were centered on three activities. (1) We sponsored 13 elementary school classrooms with NAS's conservation/nature-oriented newsletter materials called Audubon Adventures. (2) We helped to sponsor the first annual Blair County Envirōlympics for 30 high school students whose knowledge was tested in soils, wildlife, aquatic environments, forestry, solid waste disposal and ecosystems. (3) We now have a highly successful Speakers' Bureau with over 20 members who contribute programs on environmental or nature-related issues to schools and civic groups free of charge.

Our biggest money-expenders were bringing folksinger Billy Bee to three local elementary schools in Altoona, Bellwood and Hollidaysburg and sponsoring one person to attend the Audubon Ecology Workshop in Connecticut but such expenditures were considered very worthwhile in terms of educating the public about what JVAS believes is important.

Speaking of sending representatives, our funds also helped to sponsor active members to the Pennsylvania Audubon Council Meetings, the Middle Atlantic Audubon Conference and the Bottle Day in Harrisburg, all attempts to expand our horizons into the greater world beyond our own small section of Pennsylvania.

CONSERVATION

Such horizon-expanding was also evident in many of the efforts of our Conservation Committee such as helping to encourage the passage of a Bottle Bill in Pennsylvania, sending money to the Brigantine Defense Fund in New Jersey, supporting the work of the Chesapeake Bay Foundation and adopting-a-puffin.

On the local consevvation scene we have been co-sponsoring a petition to have the Bell's Gap watershed declared unsuitable for surface mining, fighting to keep large billboards off new routes 22 and 220, and becoming the caretakers of the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy-owned Tytoona Cave Natural Area in Sinking Valley.

INTERNATIONAL ISSUES

Bridging the conservation-education efforts of our society is our newly-formed International Issues Interest Group. Already we have sent \$110 to support the study of Peru's endangered Humboldt penguins, sent nature/conservation related books and magazines to a library run by Belize Audubon and have initiated a major exchange of ideas between a Peru conservation group in the Central Jungle called ECODESC and JVAS.

BIRD-RELATED ACTIVITIES

And finally, since Audubon has always been "for the birds," we have continued to be active in the Christmas Bird Count, the Big Day, the Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas and in monitoring several bluebird trails. We also held our first Bird Identification Workshop last January for the public and plan to hold more of these popular classes this coming year.

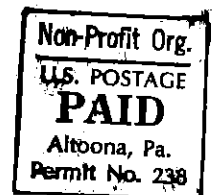
CONCLUSION

In fact, when our Finance Committee met in mid-July to consider how to spend the little over \$2,000 we would be receiving for 1986-87, we tried very hard to maintain all of our regular activities and even voted to increase our Audubon Adventures support to 20 classrooms. But our wish list--like more scholarships to environmental workshops for teachers and a slide projector for the Speakers' Bureau--had to be delayed. Our projected budget also hinges on doing much better with our Bird Seed Sale this fall.

So if you feel strongly about what we are doing, please help if you can by strongly supporting our Bird Seed Sale and by including JVAS in your charitable giving plans. We guarantee that if you donate to a specific program or cause we are supporting, all your money will be used for that purpose. After all, none of our workers are salaried and they give generously many uncounted hours of service each month to what we believe is a very worthwhile organization.

Marcia Bonta, President

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