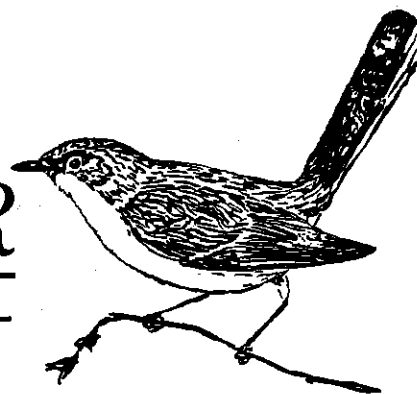


THE GNATCATCHER

Juniata Valley Audubon Society

November 1987



NOVEMBER'S PROGRAM

Join us for a program on Birds of Prey with Mike Ondik. The meeting will begin at 7:30, but COME EARLY (at 6:30) because Dave Kyler will give a short bird identification workshop in preparation for the Christmas bird count. Meet us at the 28th Street Church of the Brethren on Tuesday, November 24.

HAWKWATCHING AT TUSSEY

Dave Kyler

Hope we see a Golden Eagle!!! With that thought in mind, six hardy members of Juniata Valley Audubon plodded up a winding and sometimes steep mountain fire road towards the fire tower that is home to the Tussey Mountain hawkwatch.

Located just south of Everett, PA., overlooking both Route 30 and the Pennsylvania Turnpike, this site has provided many hours of enjoyable observation for South Central hawkwatchers. The site is located on State Game Lands and is open, for the study of raptor migration, from 1 August through 30 November each year.

After attaining the summit at 10 A.M. on the 30th of October, our small group was treated to a flurry of activity as eight red-tailed hawks passed by at close range. Both mature and immature birds passed on their way to over-wintering grounds, probably in the Southern Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. More amazing than their nearness was the fact that we were actually looking down on these raptors as they moved through. The next few hours brought several other species by, including sharp-shinned hawk and northern harrier (marsh hawk). Overflying in a south east direction and heading for the Chesapeake Bay were several flights of common loon.

Three hours later, after good conversation and munching through lunch our group left the mountain and headed on their separate ways home. No, the golden eagles never did make their appearance that day, but they will pass on blustery winds of early November. The day's tally, however, did show six northern harrier, one sharp-shinned, and thirty three red-tailed hawks, a good count for our closest hawkwatching lookout, Tussey Mountain.

BIRD SEED SALE

Bird seed was delivered from Imler's Agway last Saturday, November 14. Many thanks to all of those who helped out. Dave Kyler, Jean Holland, Doris Thurheimer, Alice Goodlin, Nona Weicht, Dick Weicht, Fran Burgoon, George Delaney, Marge Delaney, Terry Wentz, Colette Heller, Janet Huber, Dan Sinal, Jean Sinal, Daniel Brumbaugh, Eugene Root, Janet Neely.

Special thanks to Dave Keppler who organized the workers!

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Angeline Stout

This year JVAS will hold its Christmas Bird Count on December 19th. In preparation for the count I suggest attending Dave Kyler's Bird Identification workshop which will be held at 6:30 before our monthly meeting on November 24th. Dave does an excellent job of pointing out field marks and habitat. So if you're still confused about House Finch or Purple Finch, or just a little rusty this is the time to sharpen those skills. After the meeting I'll be taking names and the areas of those planning to

count. I'll also hand out maps of the 15 mile radius we attempt to cover with a bird check off list to be handed in after the count.

Our CBC is an enjoyable event but it is also providing vital information of bird populations for short and long term studies. One such study has shown the continued decline of the Black Duck. Having recorded documentation will aid in the fight for the ducks habitat and survival. So if you've never participated I invite you to do so by either turning in a feeder count or going afield. See me at the meeting or phone 946-5214 after 7:00 please. Remember also that we will be gathering at the Sinking Valley Grange at dusk after the count for a covered dish supper and to tally the count.

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

Marcia Bonta

Christmas Bird Count--Once again JVAS will be participating in the hemisphere-wide, 88th Christmas Bird Count on December 19. Angeline Stout (946-5214) is our coordinator. Our count is one of 1,540 with over 41,000 people counting in places as far away as Guam, Venezuela, and Trinidad. If you would like to participate by counting numbers and species of birds in our officially-designated count area centered in Culp or if you can count birds at your feeder, please call Angeline. We never have enough people to cover the whole circle so more help is always appreciated. For those of you who are uncertain of your birds, plan to be at our November 24 meeting by 6:30 when Dave Kyler will give a short, bird identification workshop of the species you are likely to see during the count. After counting birds all day, we will convene at the Sinking Valley Grange for our Annual Christmas Covered Dish Supper and a preliminary count of the birds we saw. Even if you don't count birds, please come, bring a covered dish, and join us in our annual pre-Christmas celebration. Everyone is welcome!

Field Trips--We had two excellent field trips this autumn. The first, led by geologist Gary Burkle, was a paean of praise for our own two distinct mountains--Brush Mountain, the last mountain in the ridge-and-valley section of Pennsylvania, and Wopsononock Mountain, the beginning of the Allegheny Plateau. Gary told us that we live in one of the most geologically-interesting areas in the world and that geology textbooks are often illustrated by photos taken of Sinking Valley (which was once 25,000 feet high) and Brush Mountain (a classic anticline that sweeps under Hollidaysburg and up again). With maps and several stops, some to dig out fossils, Gary made all of us who attended proud of our unique geological heritage.

The second field trip, led by Dave Kyler, was down to a new hawk watch established by the Allegheny Plateau Audubon (Johnstown) on State Game Lands outside the town of Everett. Since it was the opening day of turkey season, we had to park far down the mountainside and hike up what became a quite steep trail. Luckily most of us were in good shape and all of us (pant, pant!) made it. Unfortunately it was a beautiful, clear, almost windless day which meant very few hawks (mostly red-taileds with one northern harrier coming in close), hundreds of crows, turkey vultures and a black vulture (new to some of us). Nevertheless, the view was spectacular and while we saw no eagles, we almost felt like one, perched in our eyrie high above the valley

January Field Trip--Since there will be no Gnatcatcher in December, please remember that our next field trip will be a winter picnic at Warrior's Path State Park on January 16. Meet at Pleasant Valley Shopping Center at 12:30. Call the Sinals (793-4457) for further information.

The Audubon Council of Pennsylvania is now official and our own Conservation Chairperson--Paula Ford--has been chosen as interim President of the group until elections can be held. She will also be the suggested President for a two year term on the official slate prepared by the steering committee which has worked so hard to make ACP official. Congratulations Paula!

Birds of late fall--Looks like this may be a finch year. During the early snowstorm of November 10-11, the pine siskins rained down on our feeder, back porch and steps like snow (80 at least) and were accompanied by almost as many goldfinches. I also saw a song sparrow, a white-throated sparrow, juncos, and downy woodpecker, black-capped chickadees, tufted titmice, white-breasted nuthatches, a large flock of house finches and one female purple finch. Two days earlier we had had a white-crowned sparrow for two days and one female evening grosbeak. So keep those feeders loaded and your binoculars and field guide close at hand. Who knows what you may see!

MISCELLANY

WHERE IS THE JVAS BULLETIN BOARD? It has been missing for several months and was last seen in the basement of the church. If you have any information (or the bulletin board itself), please contact a JVAS officer. The bulletin board is badly needed!

WESLEY BURKET is in the Navy and would appreciate cards or letters. Address: V-3. U.S.S. Constellation CU64 FPO San Francisco, CA 96635

JVAS BOARD MEETING was held at the Altoona Public Library on Monday, November 16 (postponed from Nov. 12) Committee reports were given, and topics discussed included publicity (Cave T-shirt design and other matters), a possible Acid Rain monitoring program, and a replacement nature center for the Fort Roberdeau Park.

VISITORS AND NEWCOMERS to our chapter meetings should receive a hearty welcome. Please take time before and after our meetings to greet new people.

EDITOR'S NOTE

There will be no Gnatcatcher in December. Please submit items for the January issue before January 18 to Jim Winsor, 3940 Maple Avenue, Altoona, PA 16601.