

THE GNATCATCHER

Juniata Valley Audubon Society

February 1988

FEBRUARY'S PROGRAM



Cindy Rice of the State College Office of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will provide us with an informative program describing the importance of wetlands. A film entitled "America's Wetlands", jointly produced by the Fish and Wildlife Service and the E.P.A., will be shown first to help answer the question - Why are wetlands important and why do we need to protect them? Ms. Rice will then discuss wetland regulation and permitting requirements and will teach us handy wetland identification techniques. Considering the rapid pace of land development impacting these fragile and important habitats, we need to learn all we can about protecting our wetlands. The meeting will be held at the 28th Street Church of the Brethren (28th Street and Union Avenue) on Tuesday, February 23 at 7:30 p.m. A business meeting will precede the program.

WINTER PICNIC A SUCCESS

What has twenty-four legs and hunts for ferns, birds, and a warm fire to burn marshmallows over? The twelve brave souls at the Audubon Winter Picnic at Warriors Path State Park, of course! Saturday, January 16th began with sunny skies and moderate temperatures as we began our exploration of nature in winter. After a delicious lunch of hot dogs cooked over an open fire, Dan Sinal presented us with an interesting and informative talk about the history of the Saxton area and Warriors Path State Park. We then set off in search of birds, trees, and winter weeds. We were not disappointed. Although birds were not present in quantity, the quality made it all worth while. Flashy red cardinals, a feeding song sparrow, and two red-tailed hawks soaring overhead added to the beauty of the snow covered landscape. Thanks to John Lennox, lady fern and a fertile frond of sensitive fern were discovered and false nettle, British soldier lichen, dogbane, elderberry, and raspberry were also identified in their winter disguises. Many trees were identified including black willow, virginia pine, shagbark hickory, white pine, cucumber magnolia, and other too numerous to mention. A treed opossum provided lots of entertainment for young and old alike as we all kicked in our tidbits of knowledge about this marvelous marsupial. The day concluded with a tape of some folk songs contributed by Dan and Jean Sinal that paid tribute to the various nationalities that settled the area, the natural resources that brought them there, and even a little dancing around the campfire by two participants that simply could not control their enthusiasm for the folk music. As we prepared to leave the park, a great horned owl sounded a few choruses as if to say "Thanks for coming. Hope to see you next year." And we hope to see you at other field trips and meetings coming up this spring. A special thanks to Terry Wentz for allowing us the use of a beautiful state park.

CANOE CREEK UPDATE

Terry Wentz

Winter gradually leaves the park as days become longer and signs of Spring appear. A few bluebirds have braved the cold and have stayed all winter around the park. Mallard ducks were seen courting the first week of February which must indicate Spring is imminent. Also, a Goshawk was spotted eyeing up the finches at the park bird feeders during the last weeks in January.

This has been a busy winter season for park visitors and construction activity at Canoe Creek. Ice fishermen, skaters, skiers and winter hikers used the frozen lake in record numbers this year.

"SUPPORT SOMETHING WILD"

Help Reintroduce the River Otter
Donate on Line 10C or 19C
of the State income tax form
to the
Wild Resource Conservation Fund,
Pa's Tax Checkoff.

Write for information:

Wild Resource Conservation Fund
P.O. Box 1467
Room A1-85, 3rd & Rely Streets
Harrisburg, PA 17120



Construction of the eight cabin colony continues with four cabins now under roof. Already, at least a dozen requests have been received for cabin rentals. Of course without a definite completion date, all request are being denied until a later date.

Unfortunately, the park management plan has taken a back seat to all this activity until time is available to continue this document. The Bureau of State Parks has now set a target date to have management plans for all state parks complete including review by public hearings within three years.

Students Susan Lane and Victoria Marr from Jim Winsor's Altoona Campus biology class donated a fine collection of pressed Fall plants to be used for Environmental Education programs at Canoe Creek. Also John Patton, a park volunteer photographer, has donated a road kill Goshawk. The hawk will be mounted and used somewhere within the state park system for education. The Bureau of State Parks has a Game Commission salvage permit for collecting animals statewide to be used for educational purposes. I appreciate all volunteer efforts which contribute to a better experience for all park visitors.

Looking forward to Spring, the water level in Canoe Lake will be lowered approximately 3' to 5' beginning March 1st. Construction of the remaining portion of the mooring wall for the boat rental will be done then. Construction will be complete in time to return the lake to normal pool level for the first day of trout season April 16th. Let's hope Punxsutawney Phil's prediction is correct for an early Spring.

Dan Sinal will be working on the management plan for Warrior's Path State Park. Any persons well acquainted with Trough Creek State Park and willing to volunteer their expertise toward its management plan are encouraged to contact Canoe Creek Office for details.

For more information, contact:
Terry Wentz, Park Supt., (814) 695-6807 or 7667.

Canoe Creek State Park of the Department of Environmental Resources announces Spring programs for 1988 at Canoe Creek State Park. More information on this program may be obtained from the park office between the hours of 8:00 A.M. and 4:00 P.M. on weekdays.

February 20th, 1988 Winter Nature Walk 2:00 P.M. This hour and a half long hike will explore what happens to the animals and plants when the snow and ice of winter take hold. Dress warmly and wear boots. Meet at Pavilion #2 at 2:00 P.M.

March 19th, 1988 Spring Wildflower Walk 2:00 P.M. Spring is springing to life at Canoe Creek! Come enjoy a two hour walk searching out signs of spring. Wildflowers, trees, and the bustlings of animal life as nature comes alive after a long winter. Dress for the weather and wear boots. Program begins at 2:00 P.M. at Pavilion #2.

April 16th, 1988 Spring Wildflower Walk 2:00 P.M. The wildflowers of spring are some of the most spectacular creations of nature. Explore the Limestone Kiln Trail as we search out the colorful flags of Spring. Dress for the weather and be prepared for a muddy trail possibly. Meet at Pavilion #2 at 2:00 P.M.

JVAS CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

December 19, 1987

Angeline Stout

This year 21 people went afield while 11 watched at their feeders. A total of 59 species, (4,385 individuals) were seen. Teams at Canoe Creek saw and identified several first for our Christmas Bird Count they were Common Merganser, Ring-necked Duck, and a Common Goldeneye. Also one of our participants saw a Rufous-sided Towhee while watching her feeders. Feeder counts are important and always turn up individuals not seen in the field. 10 species were single individuals. Thanks to all who participated. See you next year.

Great Blue Heron	3	Great Horned Owl	13	Eastern Bluebird	34
Canada Goose	2	Belted Kingfisher	9	American Robin	7
American Black Duck	2	Red-headed Woodpecker	2	Northern Mockingbird	7
Mallard	204	Red-bellied Woodpecker	14	Cedar Waxwing	68
Convosback	1	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	1	European Starling	125
Ring-necked Duck	1	Downy Woodpecker	88	Northern Cardinal	159
Lesser Scaup	3	Hairy Woodpecker	16	Rufous-sided Towhee	1
Common Goldeneye	1	Yellow Shafted Flicker	6	American Tree Sparrow	35
Common Merganser	1	Pileated Woodpecker	13	Field Sparrow	22
Sharp shinned Hawk	2	Blue Jay	53	Fox Sparrow	1
Coopers Hawk	1	American Crow	218	Song Sparrow	1
Red-tailed Hawk	14	Common Raven	1	White Throated Sparrow	27
American Kestrel	7	Black-capped Chickadee	313	Dark eyed Junco	369
Ring-necked pheasant	7	Plain Titmouse	103	Brown Headed Cowbird	35
Ruffed Grouse	31	Red-breasted Nuthatch	7	House Finch	358
Wild Turkey	5	White-breasted Nuthatch	62	Pine Siskin	278
Northern Bobwhite	2	Brown Creeper	14	American Goldfinch	93
Rock Dove	297	Carolina Wren	22	Evening Grosbeak	50
Mourning Dove	226	Winter Wren	5	House Sparrow	242
Eastern Screech-Owl	3	Golden-crowned Kinglet	56		

The BACKYARD NATURALIST

By Craig Tufts

Bird House Development

How do birds choose a home? Much the same way you or I do. They evaluate, in their terms: Is the area attractive? Is it close to work (i.e. the finding of berries, insects, seeds, water, etc.)? Is the site good for a home? If there's already a home on the site, is it suitable? And, especially, is this a good place to raise a family?

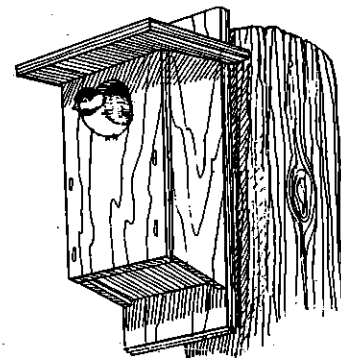
Nothing enhances a human homeowner's enjoyment and understanding of life much more than watching birds raise their young. And nothing makes watching easier than providing a birdhouse the birds can call their own. Wrens, chickadees, titmice, bluebirds, and swallows are prime occupants for ready-made homes.

one side. Perches aren't needed and in fact may attract nesters such as house sparrows that may injure box users like wrens and chickadees which you are trying to encourage.

Late winter or early spring is ideal birdhouse-building time. Mount the box 3 to 5 feet off the ground on a pole, fence post or tree trunk.

Your immediate surroundings will help you determine what kind of birds to provide for, if you want them close by: Wrens are attracted to birdhouses placed fairly close to the ground among dense trees and shrubs. Chickadees and titmice like to nest in patches of large trees. Bluebirds opt for wide open spaces—extensive lawns, golf courses, pastures and cemeteries. Swallows like the same open spaces—so long as they're close to rivers and ponds.

Each kind of bird is almost as choosy about its birdhouse construction as about its site—though all the birds mentioned will move into a basic rectangular, 5-inch-wide by 10-inch-high box built of unpainted, 1/2-inch spruce, fir, pine or exterior plywood. The box should be equipped with 3/8-inch drainage holes in the bottom and a 1 1/2-inch entrance hole placed near the top of



Once a bird family is in residence, keep a close watch—for practical as well as pleasurable reasons. A day or two after the young leave the nest, it's birdhouse-cleaning time. If you have played host to bluebirds or wrens, chances are the parents will return to their cleaned-up home to raise a second brood the same summer. That's one kind of high interest you can tolerate.

For more information about wildlife around your home, contact the National Wildlife Federation, Dept. BN, 1412 16th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

Marcia Bonta

TROPICAL FOREST MONTH - Please mark March 29 on your calendar as a JVAS meeting you must attend and come early (at 6:30) for an hour of slides on the identification of spring waterfowl and warblers by Dave Kyler. That will be followed by a business meeting, when we will elect new officers, and finally a slide-talk show on tropical forests by Dr. David Pearson of Penn State. Since this will be Dr. Pearson's last appearance at JVAS because he is moving to Arizona in June, don't miss what promises to be an outstanding program. And bring your friends!

Also, at the Eiche Library on Altoona's Penn State Campus, the Smithsonian Institute's Biodiversity Traveling Exhibit (purchased at the suggestion of new member Rick Sepp), along with our own International Issues Group's Tropical Forest display designed by Colette Heller, will be there for the month of March. In addition, the International Issues Group will be meeting March 4 at 7:00 p.m. in

the basement of the Eiche Library where they will see a NAS slide-show talk called Population and Tropical Forest Deforestation. Bruce Bonta will be reading the narration of this most colorful and informative show and everyone who is interested is urged to attend.

T-SHIRTS - JVAS t-shirts with our symbol, the blue gray gnatcatcher designed by members Truth Close and Janet Demuth, will be for sale at the February meeting. The short sleeve, high quality cotton shirts which say "Juniata Valley Audubon Society, Altoona Pa." on them will cost \$8.00.

FUND RAISING COMMITTEE - Because JVAS does not have enough revenue to support its many outreach programs, I decided to ask for volunteers to serve on a Fund Raising Committee at the January meeting. Thanks to new members Madelon Kelly and Janet Huber, as well as old members Dave Kyler, Wilson Kreitz, and Glenn Mock for volunteering. Dave Kyler will chair the committee and will hold his first meeting at 7:00 p.m. on February 23 before our program meeting. If you are interested in helping and/or have any ideas about ways to raise money, call Dave at 643-6030 or attend the meeting. Everyone's ideas are welcome.

AL BURD MEMORIAL FUND - Donations to the Al Burd Memorial Fund are beginning to come in to our treasurer Janet Neely at 8 Montgomery Street, Hollidaysburg, PA 16648. Remember that the money is to be earmarked especially for the Fort Roberdau Nature Center. You can also give your checks or cash to Janet at the meeting. I hope to acknowledge all donors in subsequent newsletters and to keep you posted on the amount of money raised.

THANKS to Roy Boyle for introducing us to environmental games at the January meeting, at which, incidentally, we had 50 people despite the bad weather. Roy is a new member and works at Canoe Creek State Park as Educational Director. We are pleased to have someone with his expertise and willingness to share. Also, thanks to Dan and Jean Sinal for leading a winter picnic field trip to Warriors Path State Park on January 16 which attracted 12 people.

ACID RAIN MONITORING - Jana Atwell, who we sponsored at last summer's Audubon Ecology Camp, has been monitoring acid rain in Duncansville for the National Audubon Society. She gave a demonstration of her work at a fall meeting and is eager to talk to anyone who is interested in this crucial study.

BANQUET - Once again Colette Heller is chairing our Banquet Committee. The banquet will be held on April 26 at 6:00 p.m. at the Bellwood Methodist Church. Our speaker will be Jerry Hassinger, biologist for the Pennsylvania Game Commission. His topic will be "Nobody Cries When Habitat Dies." The food should be great, as usual, and the fellowship warm, so please plan to attend. Colette does need volunteers to help with preparations such as decorating, flowers, door prizes, etc. so call her at 742-7481.

MIDDLE ATLANTIC REGIONAL OFFICE - Because of the National Audubon Society's fiscal decision to only partially fund regional offices, Walt Pomeroy, who heads our own Middle Atlantic office, has been forced to raise money to keep his office in Camp Hill open. If you believe in nature/conservation work at a regional level, please give generously to the individual plea for money you received from Walt early in the month. Since Walt is so near Harrisburg, we in Pennsylvania are particularly favored when it comes to help from his office on state legislation regarding conservation issues. Right now, for instance, a whole host of bills are pending including possible Pennsylvania scenic river designations, environmental education in schools, solid waste disposal, clean water, etc. If Walt can raise enough money to keep his office going, he will be right in their pitching for Pennsylvania environmental/education issues.

MIDDLE ATLANTIC REGIONAL CONFERENCE - One of Walt's biggest jobs is organizing the very interesting and fun bi-annual regional conferences. For those of us who have attended, they have been banner times because there you can meet a variety of people from all over the Middle Atlantic area and share their interests and concerns about nature and the environment. This year we will also be joined by the Northeast Region. In addition, many NAS staff members will be participating. The theme for this year's conference is "Working Together--Preparing for the Next Decade." It will be held on June 16-19, 1988 at East Stroudsburg University in East Stroudsburg, Pa. along the Delaware River in the Pocono Mountains. As usual they plan to offer a wide diversity of programs, workshops and field trips. Because you can have dorm accommodations, the cost for food and lodging is quite low. All active Audubon members are welcome to attend and to offer their expertise at workshops.

Please contact Walt Pomeroy at the National Audubon Society, 1104 Fernwood Avenue, Suite 300, Camp Hill, PA 17011 for further information.

PROJECT PUFFIN - As you may remember, JVAS's adopted puffin was released on the Seal Island National Wildlife Refuge in the summer of 1986. This summer two banded puffins, #59 and 60 from a 1984 release, returned to Seal Island. In addition, there were a total of 53 puffin sightings from Seal Island last summer and 14 of those were of puffins on land. In contrast, only 14 puffins were sighted in 1986 with 2 on land.

The Easter Egg Rock puffin colony, the pioneering reintroduction effort begun in the 1970's which re-established a colony by 1981, continues to be successful. All 18 nests occupied by puffins there in 1986 were re-occupied in 1987 and 16 of the 18 breeding pairs (17 of which had the same mates as in 1986) successfully reared their single chicks.

Although JVAS cannot afford to Adopt-a-Puffin this year, I did want to let you know that if you individually adopt a chick at \$100 you also receive the lovely 9x10" hand-colored copper etching by Cheryl Pelavin entitled "Egg Rock Update." For a \$50 donation you can still receive the etching, and if you give \$25 the interesting yearly newsletter EGG ROCK UPDATE will be yours. Make your check payable to the National Audubon Society, designate on it "Project Puffin," and send it to the National Audubon Society, Fratercula Fund, 159 Sapsucker Woods Road, Ithaca, New York 14850.

BIRDS - Speaking of birds, have you seen as many pine siskins and golden-crowned kinglets in the woods as I have? I'm calling this the year of the pine siskins. However, it is not the year for evening grosbeaks, common redpolls, and purple finches, at least on our mountain. We have to make do with an average of 12 to 14 fairly common species at our feeder and the usual woods birds like wild turkey and ruffed grouse.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Please submit items for the March issue before March 21 to Jim Winsor, 3940 Maple Avenue, Altoona, PA 16601.



Songbook and Bird Posters New from Audubon Adventures

Audubon Adventures has recently produced several colorful posters and a songbook that can be used to supplement school programs and for chapter educational activities.

Two color bird charts—one for eastern and one for western North America—each illustrate 20 different birds representing some of the variety in bird adaptations for that region.

The 1988 Audubon Month poster, portraying the animals and plants of the Arctic tundra, has just been published. Last year's tropical forest poster is still available.

The Audubon Adventures Songbook, produced by Texas songwriter Bill Oliver and the Audubon Education staff, includes the lyrics for 16 folk songs with environmental themes. The booklet also has suggestions for classroom activities based on the songs. Bill Oliver performs the songs on the accompanying cassette. The songbook and cassette were developed as a package but are available separately.

Although we have a very modest budget for printing, we plan to build on these support materials and offer more high-quality educational items. Your help in getting them out through our youth, teacher, and chapter member network is most appreciated.

Prices to Audubon chapter members (including postage and handling) are listed below. Quantity discounts are also available on the tropical rainforest and arctic tundra posters.

- Birds of Eastern North America poster (folded) \$ 4.06
- Birds of Western North America poster (folded) 4.06
- Tropical rainforest poster (rolled) 8.00
- Arctic tundra poster (rolled) 8.00
- *Audubon Adventures* Songbook 4.51
- *Audubon Adventures* Cassette 10.51

Orders should be sent to: Patricia Bulson, National Audubon Society, Education Division, Route 1, Box 171, Sharon, Conn. 06069. Make checks payable to NAS.

JUNIATA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY
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Altoona, PA 16603

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