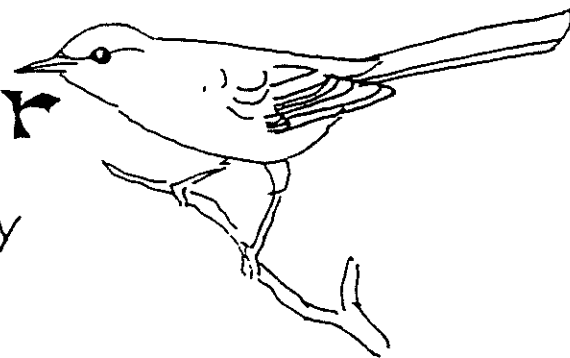


The Gnatcatcher



JUNIATA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY

JANUARY 1993

JANUARY PROGRAM: RETURN OF THE PEREGRINE TO PENNSYLVANIA

Dan Brauning, ornithologist with the Pennsylvania Game Commission, will describe efforts to restore the peregrine to the Keystone State.

TIME: 26 January 1993 (Tuesday) at 7:30 PM

PLACE: 5th Avenue United Methodist Church
5th Avenue and 4th Street
Altoona

KEYSTONE PEREGRINES by Stan Kotala

The peregrine falcon will be the subject of JVAS' January program. Prior to 1950, approximately 350 pairs of peregrines nested in the Appalachian region, with 36 pairs in Pennsylvania, mostly along cliffs near communities such as Palmerton on the Lehigh River, Dauphin on the Susquehanna, Huntingdon on the Juniata, and Hyner on the West Branch of the Susquehanna.

Reports of declining peregrine populations in the east initially were regarded as relating to some minor local problem such as raccoon depredation. It was not until 1963 during the International Ornithological Congress at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York that scientists realized that they were dealing with a continent-wide decline, the cause of which was unknown. In 1965, at the Peregrine Conference in Madison, Wisconsin research was presented which linked the decline of the peregrine to the increase in the use of the pesticide DDT which decreased eggshell thickness and caused behavioral abnormalities in these falcons. By 1968, peregrines were extirpated east of the Mississippi.

It was not until 1972 that the use of DDT was restricted in the United States. This was the most important step toward the peregrine's recovery. To help reestablish these magnificent birds the Peregrine Fund was founded in 1970 at Cornell University. This organization is dedicated to breeding peregrines in captivity and reintroducing them into the wild. The first captive-bred peregrine hatched successfully in 1973. In that same year the Endangered Species Act was instituted and the peregrine reaped some of the benefits. Release of captive-bred peregrines began in 1974.

From 1976 to 1978 there were three attempts to reintroduce these falcons along the Susquehanna River in Pennsylvania, all of which failed. The Keystone State's first successful peregrine reintroduction was coordinated by the Philadelphia Academy of Natural Sciences in 1981: 4 falcons were hatched on a ledge on the 34th floor of the PNB building in Philadelphia.

Actual nesting of peregrines in the Commonwealth was not observed until 1987, when the Peregrine Fund discovered nest sites on both the Walt Whitman and Girard Point Bridges in Philadelphia. By 1992 nests had been found on five bridges in the Philadelphia area as well as on the Gulf Tower in Pittsburgh. No cliff-nesting peregrines have been found in the Keystone State.

Last summer, the Pennsylvania Game Commission coordinated an effort to restore the peregrine to central Pennsylvania by placing 3 young falcons in a hack box on top of the Fulton Bank building in Harrisburg. It is hoped that this will result in the re-establishment of a breeding peregrine population in the Susquehanna drainage system with birds returning to their historic eyries removed from the stressful urban conditions which increase their susceptibility to disease. These restoration efforts will be the focus of

our January program presented by Pennsylvania Game Commission ornithologist Dan Brauning, who has been instrumental in this historic program. We hope that all JVAS members will join us for this exciting presentation!

SPECIAL AREAS PROJECTS by Stan Kotala

The Juniata Valley Audubon Society is sponsoring three Special Areas Projects in 1993:

CANOE CREEK STATE PARK: This project was initiated in 1992 by JVAS vice-president Bill King. It has been extremely successful: 152 species of birds were tallied at this park last year. Censuses were conducted on a monthly basis. This year's counts will occur every other month. Special thanks to all who helped us last year: Melissa Focht, Janet Huber, Bill King, Gary Koch, Stan Kotala, Dave Kyler, Dan Sinal, and Terry Wentz.

TROUGH CREEK STATE PARK: This park in Huntingdon County consists of 541 acres of bottomland habitat along Trough Creek as well as adjacent forested mountainsides. Our first bird census of 1993 will take place there on Sunday, January 24th. If you are interested in participating, please call Dave Kyler at (814) 643-6030.

FORT ROBERDEAU COUNTY PARK: This park consists of 45 acres of woodland and fields in Sinking Valley, Blair County. The wooded area consists mostly of mature hardwoods, dominated by oak species. Several springs and seeps arise in this forest. There is one all-season brook and a pond at the edge of the woods. A small old-field area is just west of the barn/visitors' center. The remainder of the park consists of a reconstructed Revolutionary War era fort and mowed fields. The entire area is relatively flat.

Stan Kotala will coordinate the Fort Roberdeau Special Areas Project. It will consist of monthly bird censuses throughout 1993. Two censuses will be conducted during the peak migration months of May and September. Our goal is to produce a checklist of birds found in this park with particular attention to neotropical migrants and breeding birds. Such a checklist would be useful for the environmental education programs which take place at Fort Roberdeau. Anyone interested in helping with this project should call Stan Kotala at (814) 946-8840.

FROM THE GNATCATCHER'S' NEST by Dave Kyler

As we become caught up in our busy and sometimes hectic schedules, often we forget to express gratitude for the many things that you have done to help the Audubon effort over the years. To all who have helped in both large and small ways, a most appreciated thank-you!

Our hopes are that you had a happy and healthy holiday season and that you are looking forward to a new Audubon year with a renewed and optimistic spirit!

Field notes: RIVERSIDE/BI-LO REGISTER RECEIPTS are being collected by Anne Borland, 138 Larch Street, Hollidaysburg, PA 16648.

The OUTDOOR SHOW at the Jaffa Mosque will take place on February 26, 27, and 28. Volunteers are needed to man the JVAS booth. Call Dave Kyler at (814) 643-6030 if you are interested.

The fourth annual RAYSTOWN WINTER EAGLE CENSUS was conducted by boating the entire length of Raystown Lake on January 8th. JVAS president Dave Kyler, Pennsylvania Game Commission Land Management Officer Rob Criswell, and Wildlife Conservation Officer Phil Lukish saw a total of eight bald eagles (6 adult, 2 subadult) during the census.



WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS!

The Juniata Valley Audubon Society welcomes the new members who enrolled in the last half of 1992:

Helen M. Archer
J. and J. Armstrong
J. Bagshaw
Helen B. Boyer
Sara Bowley
Diana Brueckner
Dorothy K. Caplan
Tim Cartwright
Gerald P. Chalfin
Susan L. Clapper
Sharon Crawford
Thomas Davis
Margery Delany
Kirk Dickson
Terry L. Dodson
Janine Felty
Patricia L. Frye
Shelby J. Gerrity
Darnia Getz
Linda L. Gibbs
James Grager
J. Graham
Evelyn Green
D. Grubb
Jessica Guyer
Lucinda Hall
Kathy Hilderhoff
Verla Hinson
Diane Houtz
C. F. Hugg
Rich P. Jukes
E. K. Kaufman
Milton G. Killerbrew
Sam Kipp
Allison Klein
Rebecca Kruse
Rose Lawler
Stanley W. Lego
Thomas L. Lewis
Brenda M. Lochner
Suzanne Loibl
Mrs. James McFarland
Patricia A. Meek
Kathryn Miele
Terri L. Mills
Charles Moun
Chris Newman
Michael D. Nichols
George W. Nicholson
Barbara S. Nicolino
Verla M. Oakley
John H. Orr
Sara Pittman
Rita Popelish

Houtzdale
Huntingdon
Hollidaysburg
Roaring Spring
Alexandria
Hollidaysburg
Altoona
Altoona
Altoona
Huntingdon
Buffalo Mills
Huntingdon
Altoona
Huntingdon
Altoona
Duncansville
Williamsburg
Williamsburg
Tyrone
Huntingdon
Tipton
Newry
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Everett
Huntingdon
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Huntingdon
Alexandria
Clearville
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Loysburg
Hollidaysburg
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Huntingdon
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Loretto
Hollidaysburg
New Enterprise
Waterfall
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Gallitzin
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Tyrone
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continued

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Laura Schleich
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Autumn Smith
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Mr. and Mrs. Carl E. Wilson
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Breezewood
Everett
Bedford
Bellwood
Duncansville
Bedford
Huntingdon
Tyrone
Tyrone
Huntingdon

THE DEADLINE FOR ARTICLES FOR THE FEBRUARY GNATCATCHER IS FEBRUARY 6th. Please submit articles to the editor, Stan Kotala, R.D. 3, Box 866, Altoona, PA 16601.

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