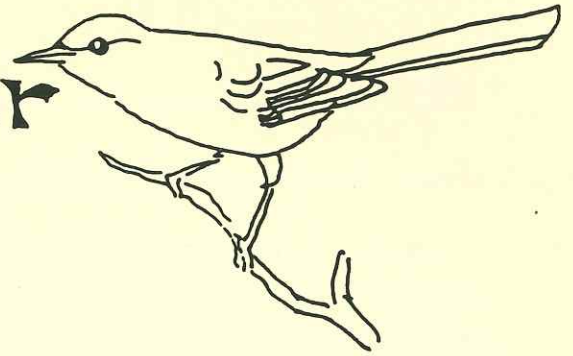


# The Gnatcatcher



Newsletter of the  
**Juniata Valley Audubon Society**

P.O. Box 2378, Altoona, Pennsylvania 16603

October 1994

## The Fine Art of Pishing

By Marcia Bonta

Several weeks ago my husband, Bruce, burst into uncontrollable laughter while reading the Sept./Oct. issue of *Bird Watcher's Digest*. "What's so funny?" I asked him. "Listen to this letter," he answered and proceeded to read a letter from a young woman birder in the military named Michelle Blanchard, who doesn't know how to pish.

"I've tried," she wrote, "but I must be doing it wrong. Every time I pish, the birds look startled and fly away in alarm. I dream of calling in warblers and sparrows and wrens, but my pishing merely terrifies them . . . I know Miss Manners will never cover the proper way of pishing, so I must turn to the experts in the field. Please . . . could you pish on the *BWD* Bird Information Line, so I could call and hear how one properly pishes?"

So *BWD* obliged, and from mid-August to mid-October aspiring pishers could dial (614) 373-2181 and get the lowdown on the proper ways to pish.

Since my pishing sometimes works and sometimes doesn't, I dialed the number the other day and learned that my pishing is one of several proper ways to call in birds, but they did warn aspiring pishers not to pish too loudly or they may scare away the birds. I guess they don't know our son, Mark. He never gives up, pishes 5 minutes at a stretch, is loud, and is finally successful.

I, on the other hand, try a couple and if it doesn't work at once, I abandon my efforts. What I've found is that there are certain bird species that *always* react — Black-capped Chickadees, Tufted Titmice, Black-throated Blue Warblers, and Hooded Warblers — some that usually react — Golden-crowned Kinglets, Carolina, Winter, and House Wrens, and Rufous-sided Towhees — and some that react according to the time of year. Others always flee no matter how hard I try. (Cont'd on page 4)

### October Program

"BAT MANAGEMENT IN PENNSYLVANIA" — Penn State's Lisa Williams will present an exciting Halloween program on the Pa. Game Commission's research on bats of the Keystone State.

7:15 p.m., Monday, Oct. 31 at 5th Avenue United Methodist Church, 5th Ave. & 4th St., Altoona

### Field Trips

To DUNLO BOG on Sunday, Oct. 23. Paula Ford will lead this joint field trip with the Seneca Rocks Audubon Society to a Cambria County bog. (See "Slog in a Bog," page 3)

"BEGINNING BIRDING" with trip leader Stan Kotala

2:30 p.m., Sunday, Nov. 6 at Fort Roberdeau County Park

### Next Board Meeting

7 p.m., Monday, Nov. 7 at President Stan Kotala's residence. All members are welcome. Phone Stan at 946-8840 for directions.

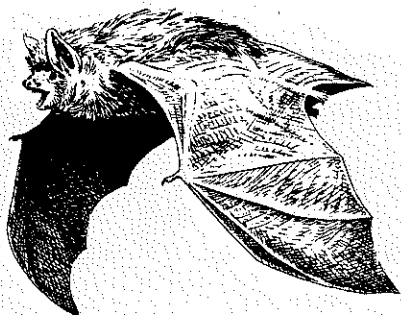
## From the Gnatcatcher's Nest ...

We're very fortunate this month in being able to present a program by one of America's leading bat researchers, Lisa Williams, of Penn State's School of Forest Resources.

Lisa will discuss bat management in Pennsylvania with special emphasis on how we can help bats through the construction of shelters designed specifically for them.

Dr. Merlin Tuttle, founder of Bat Conservation International, proclaimed that Lisa Williams has contributed more knowledge to the subject of bat houses than anyone in North America.

All JVAS members are strongly encouraged to attend our special Halloween bat program to learn more about these fascinating — but often misunderstood — mammals. (K)



Little Brown Myotis by Ned Smith

## Blair County Bird List Compiled

Inserted in this issue of the newsletter you'll find the new *Checklist of Birds of Blair County*. It catalogs all birds known to have been sighted in the county over the past 20 years.

The list was compiled last month by Paula Ford, Bill King, Dave Kyler, Gene Zielinski, and Stan Kotala. Revisions or updates should be reported to any of the aforementioned persons. (K)

## Chapter Actions

In September the JVAS Board of Directors took the following actions:

- Wrote letters to Senators Wofford and Specter urging them to support S 921 to strengthen the Endangered Species Act.

- Wrote a letter to Peter S. Duncan, Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Game Commission expressing support for the proposed reintroduction of fishers (*Martes pennanti*) to the Commonwealth.

- Wrote a letter to Senator Jubelirer asking him to support HB 988, the Pesticide Notification Act. (K)

## Welcome, New Members!

We welcome the following new members who have joined the Juniata Valley Audubon Society from August 1 through September 15. Transfers into our Chapter are marked with an asterisk.

Bob Barker, of Tyrone  
 \*Janet Bell, of Duncansville  
 Sally A. Boone, of Huntingdon  
 Ralph Culbertson, of Huntingdon  
 M. Edgar Datesman, of Bedford  
 Jane F. Dillen, of Hollidaysburg  
 Kenneth P. Fluke, of Altoona  
 Alan Hammond, of Bedford  
 Ron Harris, of Hollidaysburg  
 Susan L. Heidler, of Hollidaysburg  
 Louretta Hicks, of Imler  
 M.H. Hockenbrock, of Broad Top  
 \*Mike Kendall, of Duncansville  
 Joseph Johnson, of Madera  
 Mrs. Hilda B. Kulmatycki, of Hesston  
 Brooke L. Leppert, of Bedford  
 Barry Lingenfelter, of Hollidaysburg  
 Brenda M. Lochner, of Hollidaysburg  
 Donald A. Logan, of Hollidaysburg  
 Mrs. Karin Mitcham, of Altoona  
 Elaine Mobley, of East Freedom  
 Marla Pennabaker, of Everett  
 L.P. Piotrowski, of Altoona  
 John C. Robine, of Lilly  
 Edith Ross, of Alexandria  
 Barbara Peter Rossi, of Altoona  
 Charles Schlegel, of Huntingdon  
 Ms. Velma M. Slagenweit, of Roaring Spring  
 Ms. Suzanne Snyder, of Martinsburg  
 Pam Sponsler, of Everett  
 Frank Swalga, of Altoona  
 Carol A. Wertz, of Altoona  
 Mary Wiser, of Huntingdon  
 George Wolfe, of Tyrone

— Ed.

## CONSERVATION

O

R As Conservation Chair I often get last-minute  
N alerts from National on issues that arise  
E suddenly. I recently received an e-mail ap-  
R peal for calls to Congress regarding protection  
of desert lands in California. The vote was  
scheduled with only two days' notice, so there  
wasn't time for Action Alerts to be sent by mail. In  
such instances a local phone tree would be the only  
option for spreading the word quickly.

If you're willing to call Representative Shuster  
or Senator Wofford on an "as needed" basis, please  
contact me (at 695-4799). If there's enough interest,  
I'll develop a phone tree for the JVAS, and we can  
react efficiently when necessary. A daytime phone  
call to Washington runs about 50 cents for a short  
message, so this would not require a large invest-  
ment of either time or money. Thanks!

**Air Quality** — Those who've traveled around the  
country know that in many places Air Quality Index  
information is provided routinely with the weather  
report. Recently, Stan Kotala and I wrote to the  
GM of television station WTAJ-TV requesting this  
service for our area. We haven't yet received an  
answer to our request, but will keep you posted.

**Integrated Pest Management** — Many thanks to  
those members who contacted Senator Jubelirer  
regarding HB 988. This bill would require schools  
to reduce their use of pesticides and alert parents in  
advance of their use. School districts in other states  
that have used IPM instead of routine applications of  
pesticides have reported saving many thousands of  
dollars yearly. The bill would set up a win-win situ-  
ation. Unfortunately, the Senate may not act before  
adjourning for the election.

**Speaking of Elections** — Remember to consider  
candidates' environmental records when you vote on  
November 8. I'll have scorecards at the October  
meeting. If you can't attend, call me for more  
information.

— PF

## Slog in a Bog

The JVAS is conducting a special areas project  
at the Dunlo Strip Mine Reclamation Area of the  
Gallitzin State Forest. The 700-acre reclamation  
area includes several hundred acres of grasslands  
and a bog.

Although we didn't begin the project until after  
the spring migration, we've had some exciting bird-  
ing here over the past few months. District Forester  
Gary Scott, Stan Kotala, Dave Kyler, Bill King,  
Gene Zielinski, Cynthia Spencer, and Paula Ford  
have recorded 56 species including grasslands spar-  
rows (Vesper, Savannah, Grasshopper, and Hens-  
low's) that we don't often see in our neck of the  
woods. Ask Stan about his close encounter with a  
raven! We've also marveled at a dozen species of  
ferns, patches of sundew, puffs of cotton grass, wild  
cranberry, and the smell of "swamp gas."

Be sure to join us for a very special field trip to  
a very special place. We'll be hosting our friends  
from the Seneca Rocks Audubon Society in Clarion.  
In turn, next April they will show us a reclaimed  
strip mine in their area that is known for Short-eared  
Owls and Upland Sandpipers.

The trip will be on Sunday, October 23. We'll  
meet at the Pleasant Valley Shopping Center at 7:30  
a.m. to carpool to the site. Please be prompt  
because we're meeting the SRAS folks at 8:30.

Boots are a must — the site is very wet. You'll  
also need to bring a lunch. Call Paula (695-4799)  
for more info.

— PF, bog lover

## Send Your Bi Lo/Riverside Receipts to Anne

Please continue to send your grocery receipts  
from Bi Lo Foods and Riverside Markets to Anne  
Borland, at 138A Larch St., Hollidaysburg, PA  
16648. She redeems the receipts for CASH for the  
JVAS. Thanks, and keep 'em comin'!

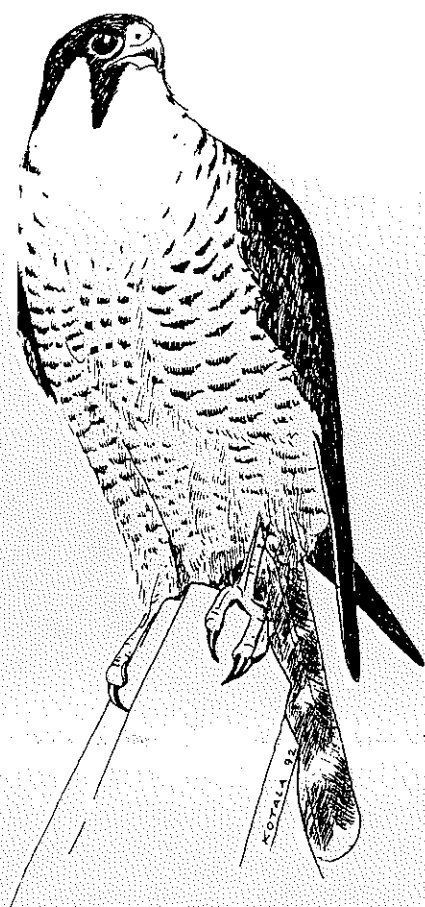
— Ed.

### ACP Meeting Held at Canoe Creek

On Sept. 23-25 the Audubon Council of Pennsylvania met at Canoe Creek State Park. Highlights of the meeting included an inspiring chapter-sharing session that featured Nancy Jones, of the Bucks County Audubon Society, telling of her chapter's commitment to raise \$3 million to purchase 70 acres of land adjacent to its Honey Hollow Nature Center.

Maurice Pap La Rin showed videos and explained Lycoming Audubon's work to restore the Peregrine Falcon as a breeding species in downtown Williamsport. It was thrilling to see immature falcons being "hacked" successfully.

Fred Crowley, of Seneca Rocks Audubon, spoke of his chapter's new checklist of the



*Peregrine Falcon by Stan Kotala*

birds of Clarion County. Our chapter now has a bird checklist for Blair County, and copies were given to all ACP meeting attendees.

Nitty-gritty work at the meeting included discussions of fundraising and outreach to inactive chapters. These discussions are important and *never* boring!

On Saturday evening Mike and Laura Jackson shared our chapter's successful exchange with Honduran environmental educators by showing their fabulous slides. Everyone agreed that this was a wonderful program.

Any JVAS member who has thoughts or concerns about the ACP should contact Paula Ford at 695-4799. Thanks! — PF



### Pishing . . . . (Cont'd from page 1)

But my greatest pishing triumph this year occurred at Bear Meadows Natural Area in late July. I'd finished eating my lunch while seated beneath a hemlock tree when I heard the twitter of small birds so I tried a little pishing. To my amazement, a Sharp-shinned Hawk swooped in low over my head, landed on a low branch about 20 feet from where I sat, peered around as if looking for the pisher, spotted me, and hastily flew off.

Now, that's pishing!

### DER's "Environmental Insight"

A quarterly publication entitled *Environmental Insight* is available free of charge from the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Resources. It's a first-class journal dealing with important environmental issues for the '90s around the Keystone State. I recommend you get your name on the mailing list.

To do so, write Department of Environmental Resources, Office of Public Liaison, P.O. Box 2063, Harrisburg, PA 17105-2063. Or better still, call (717) 783-2300. — Ed.

## Ned Smith Center for Nature and Art Planned

Until this year I'd been casually aware of the work of nature artist Ned Smith. I'd seen some of his art on the covers of *Pennsylvania Game News* and had seen several of his pen-and-ink drawings in various Pa. Game Commission publications.

In January, however, John, hubby of JVAS member Lynne Rice, introduced me to several of Ned Smith's limited-edition prints, which grace the Rices' dining room in Tyrone. I became an immediate fan and a "Johnny-come-lately" regarding acquiring some of his art. Ned died in 1985. Since his death, the value of his work has continued to rise. Original paintings now command prices in excess of \$50,000, and some of his signed popular prints have a resale value of more than \$4,000.

A native of Millersburg, on the Susquehanna River, Ned was a self-taught artist whose work was based on a lifetime of personal observations. In his 46-year career he created thousands of astonishingly accurate drawings and paintings of wildlife that appeared in books, magazines, and other publications, including nearly 120 cover paintings for *Pennsylvania Game News*.

His illustrated columns were fixtures of *Sports Afield* and *National Wildlife* magazines, and his *Game News* column, "Gone for the Day" was published in book form in 1971, and remains an acknowledged classic of Pennsylvania nature writing. In 1983 Ned was given the honor of creating Pennsylvania's first-ever state duck stamp, and he painted a second design two years later.

On Oct. 7 my new interest found me in attendance at a fund-raising Ned Smith Tribute Banquet and Art Auction at the Country Club of Harrisburg to benefit the future Ned Smith Center for Nature and Art. The highlight of the auction was the sale (for \$5,100) of print number 1 in the special Conservation Edition of "Dutch Country Bluebirds," Ned's 1984 Working Together for Wildlife print.

The art auction was part of a Ned Smith Tribute Weekend in Millersburg, featuring the first public exhibit of Mrs. Smith's collection, a tribute dinner, and a day of family-oriented activities.

To further Ned's legacy, the Ned Smith Center for Nature and Art has been founded. When completed, it will merge two traditional institutions, the nature center and the art museum, in the same way Ned sought to bridge the gap between science and art through his work.

Plans call for the creation of a modern gallery and interpretive center, set in a woodland near Millersburg. The core of the center's collection will be hundreds of his original paintings, drawings, field sketches, journal notes, and manuscripts, donated by his widow, Marie.

The center will show Ned's work on a permanent basis, along with exhibits, trails, and plantings that will interpret the natural landscape in which he worked. The center also will feature the work of other nationally known wildlife artists and photographers in a series of changing exhibits and public programs.

If you're one of Ned Smith's many admirers and would like to learn more about this exciting undertaking, please complete and return this coupon:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Please mail to:

**Ned Smith Center for Nature and Art  
P.O. Box 33  
Millersburg, PA 17061**

Enclosed is my contribution of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ — Ed.

### Dan Sinal's Impromptu Field Trips

JVAS member Dan Sinal will be conducting spur-of-the-moment day field trips to Pennsylvania sites and surrounding areas.

If anyone is interested in participating, please let Dan know and he'll call you a day or so in advance to let you know where he's going. Dan's phone number (wrong in the last issue) is 793-9507.

— Ed.

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### Fort Roberdeau Bird Feeding Program Started

Donations of seed, feeders, and money are being accepted for our bird observation and feeding area adjacent to the White Oak Hall at Fort Roberdeau County Park in Sinking Valley.

This fall will mark the beginning of a year-round bird feeding program at the park that not only will benefit the birds, but also will benefit school children and other visitors in late spring and summer.

If you wish to make a donation, please send it to JVAS Treasurer Amy King, at 3021 W. Chestnut Ave., Altoona, PA 16602, and specify that it is for the Fort Roberdeau feeders.



EDITOR'S NOTE: The deadline for November's issue of *The Gnatcatcher* is November 8. Please submit articles to editor Charlie Hoyer, P.O. Box 32, Tyrone, PA 16686-0032.

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