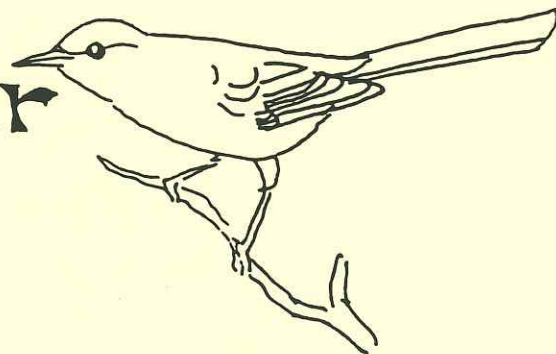


# The Gnatcatcher



Newsletter of the  
**Juniata Valley Audubon Society**

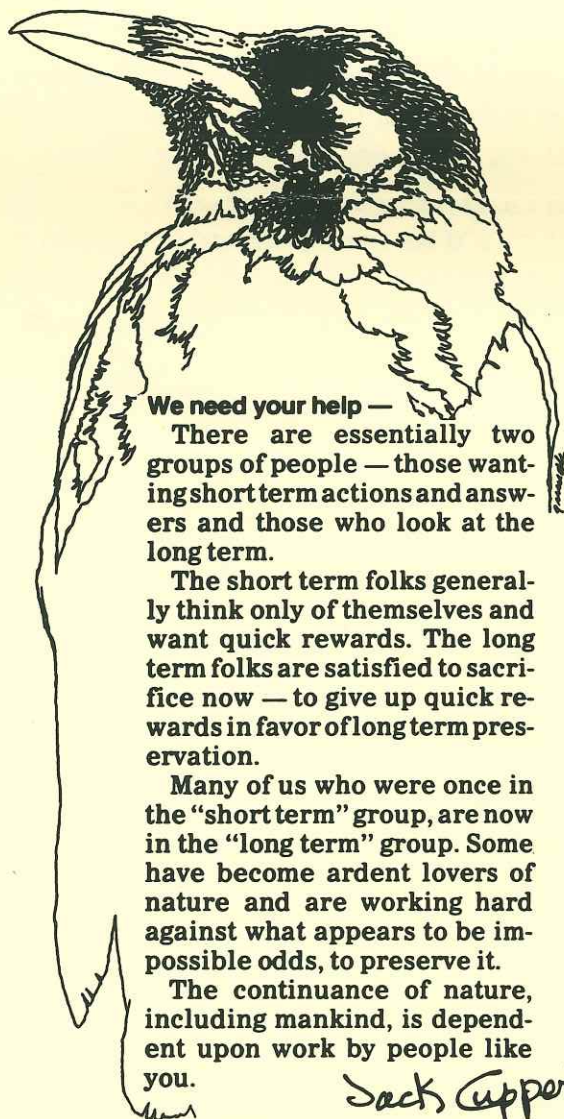
R.R. 3, Box 866, Altoona, Pennsylvania 16601

September 1995

## We Need Your Help!

By Jack Cupper

I wrote the following commentary about 10 years ago; however, it seems even more appropriate today, with the dismantling of environmental laws by Congress.



### We need your help —

There are essentially two groups of people — those wanting short term actions and answers and those who look at the long term.

The short term folks generally think only of themselves and want quick rewards. The long term folks are satisfied to sacrifice now — to give up quick rewards in favor of long term preservation.

Many of us who were once in the "short term" group, are now in the "long term" group. Some have become ardent lovers of nature and are working hard against what appears to be impossible odds, to preserve it.

The continuance of nature, including mankind, is dependent upon work by people like you.

*Jack Cupper*

### September Program

*"THE ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT"* — Carole Copeyon, of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, will discuss the ESA as it relates to the preservation of biodiversity.

7:15 p.m., Monday, Sept. 11 at Fifth Avenue United Methodist Church, 5th Ave. & 4th St., Altoona

### Field Trips

*LIMEROCK ORNAMENTAL GRASS NURSERY*, Stormstown, with trip leader Charlie Hoyer (see page 2).

Meet at LaScala's Restaurant for a buffet breakfast at 7:30 a.m., Saturday, Sept. 23. The nursery tour begins at 9.

*"COLONIAL HARVEST CELEBRATION"* at Fort Roberdeau County Park. Bird walk, woods walk, hayrides, homemade foods, music, and storytelling.

1 to 5 p.m., Sunday, Oct. 8

*"BEGINNING BIRDING"* with trip leader Stan Kotala.

1 p.m., Sunday, Oct. 15 at Fort Roberdeau County Park

### Next Board Meeting

7 p.m., Monday, Nov. 6 at President Stan Kotala's residence. All members are welcome. Phone Stan at 946-8840 for directions.



### *From the Gnatcatcher's Nest . . .*

All members of the Juniata Valley Audubon Society are strongly encouraged to attend this month's program on the Endangered Species Act. This landmark conservation law has come under fierce attack by members of Congress whose goal is to eliminate protection for endangered flora and fauna.

Everyone who has any appreciation for Nature should support a strong Endangered Species Act. This law is essential for the maintenance of biodiversity as Carole Copeyon, of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, will show us in JVAS' September program.

I hope to see you there!

*Stan*

### **Wetland Losses**

The latest inventory conducted by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resource Conservation Service shows that Pennsylvania lost 15,700 acres of wetlands since 1982. (K)

### **Quail Decline**

Cal DuBrock, director of the Bureau of Wildlife Management at the Pa. Game Commission, reports that northern bobwhite call counts last year were 77% below the previous 8-year average. Prospects for quail recovery are not good due to disappearing habitat. (K)

### **Hawk Mountain — 1994**

According to *The BWD Skimmer*, newsletter published by *Bird Watcher's Digest*, last year's fall flight count of 15,946 raptors at Hawk Mountain was down 23% from the 5-year average of 20,823. Much of the decline can be traced to drop-offs in

three species: broad-winged hawk (down 49%), sharp-shinned hawk (down 29%), and osprey (down 30%). The drop in broad-wingeds is attributed to the birds taking a different flight line, with unusually large numbers being reported from coastal sites. There was no explanation for the decline in ospreys, but the drop in sharp-shinneds follows a pattern that's been developing in East Coast watches for nearly a decade. — Ed.

### **Limerock Field Trip**

For a tour of one of the largest commercial collections of ornamental grasses, be sure to join us at Limerock Ornamental Grasses, Inc., located on Rt. 550 just north of Stormstown in Centre Co. Limerock specializes in grasses, fall-blooming perennials, ferns, wildflowers, and woody shrubs.

Forms of grasses range from low and mounding to those with vertical lines and impressive heights. Several will be showing their fall foliage colors.

Let's meet for breakfast at LaScalia's Restaurant (on old Rt. 220 between Tyrone and Bald Eagle) at 7:30 a.m., after which we'll travel 15 minutes to the nursery. — Ed.

### **JVAS Officers and Chairpersons**

President . . . . .	Stan Kotala	946-8840
Vice President . . . . .	Bill King	942-7673
Secretary . . . . .	Eugene Zielinski	353-8212
Treasurer . . . . .	Marge Hoyer	684-7376
Membership . . . . .	Marcia Bonta	684-3113
Newsletter . . . . .	Charlie Hoyer	684-7376
Conservation . . . . .	Paula Ford	695-4799
Education . . . . .	Collette Heller	742-7481
International Issues . . . . .	Bruce Bonta	684-3113
Field Trips . . . . .	Janet Huber	942-5752
Hospitality . . . . .	Barbara Corle	276-3428
Historian . . . . .	Barbara Baird	946-0256
Christmas Bird Count . . . . .	Bill King	942-7673
Wetlands . . . . .	Theodora Kreitz	695-0126
A.C.P. Representative . . . . .	Paula Ford	695-4799
Director . . . . .	Marcia Bonta	684-3113
Director . . . . .	Anne Borland	695-9718
Director . . . . .	Francis Burgoon	695-5857
Director . . . . .	Dave Kyler	643-6030



## CONSERVATION

O  
R What next?

N  
E It seems that every day brings some new  
R outrageous attack on the environment. No,  
it's not a drunken sea captain who blunders  
his ship onto rocks and spills a hazardous  
cargo into pristine waters. It's not a foreign enemy  
that is trying to poison our drinking water. It's our  
very own Congress that has been introducing one  
outrageous piece of legislation after another.

Some examples:

**Takings.** Some members of Congress think we  
should pay polluters not to pollute. Oh, they know  
most Americans would object to such a concept, so  
they tell us that they are trying to protect our  
"property rights."

**Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.** Audubon  
members and other environmentalists have fought  
twice to protect this important tract of land that is  
home to the Gwi'ichin people and to the Porcupine  
Caribou herd that they depend on, and to countless  
birds and other wildlife. Now, some members of  
Congress want to include projected revenues from  
oil drilling in this wilderness as part of an effort to  
balance the federal budget. In other words, they are  
trying to hide their efforts to open this pristine  
wilderness to highly speculative oil drilling.

**Endangered Species Act.** Our own senator,  
Rick Santorum, said in a letter to me that he thinks  
the ESA needs to be revised because "it is now a  
tool for various interests to influence land use  
planning decisions." Isn't that exactly the point?  
We should *plan* our uses of the land so that no  
species becomes extinct because of our activities.

**Water and wetlands.** Our own congressman,  
Bud Shuster, introduced legislation (H.R. 961) that  
would roll back protection of drinking water and  
wetlands. For example, his spokesperson has  
referred to systems that treat sewage before it is  
discharged into rivers and oceans as "redundant."  
Most of us would prefer to use "redundant" systems

that kill bacteria in sewage before dumping it. We  
know that we all live downstream and that systems  
that only remove the solid matter from sewage are  
not enough to protect health and the environment.  
We're very lucky that the Senate has tabled this bill  
for now.

These are terrible times. When we should be  
trying to ensure that our country is safe, clean,  
healthy, and beautiful, some members of our Con-  
gress think they have a mandate to make our county  
less safe, less clean, less healthy, and less beautiful.

Let them know what you think. Our only hope  
of stopping this onslaught against the things that  
make our lives livable is if many, many people  
speak up. Write to your members of Congress  
today!

To a senator:

The Honorable (name)  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

To a representative:

The Honorable (name)  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

— PF

## ACP Fall Meeting Set

The Audubon Council of Central Pennsylvania  
will meet on Oct. 20-22 at Black Moshannon State  
Park. A full agenda is planned, and activities for  
children will be offered. Why not make this a  
family weekend?

The ACP has reserved several cabins that will be  
available on a first-come, first serve basis for those  
who register to attend. Of course, Black Moshannon  
is an easy day-trip away for most JVAS members,  
so if you can't come for the weekend, you'll be  
welcome for any part of the meetings.

If you want more information, see Paula at the  
JVAS meeting on Sept. 11, or call her (695-4799).

— PF

### Wildlife Diversity Funding Initiative

Many of you may remember an article I wrote last spring about the Wildlife Diversity Funding Initiative — the proposal for a 5% surcharge to be placed on outdoor recreational equipment for the purpose of providing funding for nongame conservation programs. I'm pleased to report that this initiative is off to a good start, with more than 100 organizations and companies expressing their support.

Federal legislation to make this proposal a reality will be introduced in Congress this October or November. It has a good chance of becoming law since our current congressional leaders view this proposal favorably due to its nonregulatory, incentive-based, state-initiated emphasis.

All that's required of you now is for you to write letters to several key companies listed on the accompanying green sheet. Tell them you support the Wildlife Diversity Funding Initiative and ask them to support it as well. (K)

### Raffle for ACP

The Audubon Council of Pennsylvania is conducting the first annual ACP Supporters' Drawing to support its teacher training workshops, bird monitoring programs, and habitat protection projects. Tickets are \$1 each or 12 for \$10. The drawing will be held at the fall ACP meeting at Black Moshannon State Park.

First prize is one week at the Audubon Adult Ecology or Ornithology Camp in Maine. Second prize is "Snowy Egret," a fine art print by Taylor Oughton. Third prize is a collection of six books, including two by JVAS members Marcia Bonta and Paula Ford. Fourth prize is one night for two at "Wingate Manor Bed and Breakfast" near Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge. Fifth prize is a Victorinox Swiss army knife. All prizes were donated; therefore, all proceeds will benefit the ACP.

Please help the ACP by sending in the yellow raffle tickets found with this newsletter. If you would like to purchase (or sell!) additional tickets, feel free to make photocopies. Thanks! — PF

### BOOK REVIEW



#### *Rattler Tales from Northcentral Pennsylvania*

by C.E. Brennan

1995, University of Pittsburgh Press

Paper, \$15.95 — Cloth, \$29.95

Curt Brennan is a man with a mission: to protect and serve the interests of that legendary pit viper known as the timber rattlesnake. So completely does he identify with this reptile that he has even taken on some of its characteristics. Normally shy and elusive, he likes to spend the warmer months foraging in rocky, wooded habitat around his northern Pa. home, avoiding flat-footed flatlanders whenever possible, and resorting to barbed *ad hominem* attacks only when cornered by some unwary redneck or literary critic.

This book, the result of years of labor and decades of observation and experience, represents Brennan's most ambitious strike yet. By turns lyrical, scientific, folkloric and humorous, *Rattler Tales* advocates with equal passion the cause of the snake and the lifestyle of "converted" snake hunters like himself.

It's a book that tackles many tough issues and operates on several levels. After meeting Curt a couple of times, I was so taken in by his self-deprecating attitude about his writing that I was caught off guard by the lyricism of some passages. This got me to thinking (as critics will do) about the place of *Rattler Tales* within the context of contemporary nature writing, which tends to rhapsodize and philosophize at great length about the human potential for Connection With The Earth, yet frequently offers little evidence that the authors themselves spend much time away from their computers. Not so this book.

In fact, *Rattler Tales* resembles nothing so much as a fast-paced ramble and scramble through the Big Woods, leaving the reader exhilarated and a little out of breath. Our paths intersect or briefly overlap with those of other ridge-runners and naturalists along the way, broadening our perspective with their views. By the end of the book, a kind of consensus on the status and fate of *Crotalus horridus* emerges from this collection of often contradictory tales and opinions.

In his "Preface," Brennan puts it like this: "The path of the timber rattlesnake leads to sparkling mountain brooks and sphagnum bogs, through dense thickets of mountain laurel and sweet fern, and beneath tightly woven canopies of hemlock and white pine. It leads to pinnacles of weather-beaten sandstone and across carpets of shale. It is a path of no end, circling wildly in the heart of the Black Forest. . . ."

Come to think of it, that sounds like a description of the probable fate of the last batch of unwary tourists Curt took rattlesnake hunting! Always beware of a man with a mission — without a doubt, the most dangerous critter in the whole woods.

— Dave Bonta



## Nesting Acadian Flycatchers

As we led a Juniata Valley Audubon Society Forest Stewardship walk up our hollow road in May of 1994, JVAS President Stan Kotala suddenly said, "Sounds like you have an Acadian flycatcher here." We paused to listen to what I had always assumed was the warning call of a songbird. Instead, the sharp explosive "pit-see" was the "song" of one of the five, hard-to-identify, look-alike Empidonax flycatchers.

A couple years previously, our son Mark had spotted an Acadian flycatcher during migration time sitting in a hemlock tree beside the road.

"Keep a watch out for breeding Acadian flycatchers," he had told me.

I remembered his words as we continued our JVAS walk and heard Acadian flycatchers singing not only near our hollow road, but along the Black Gum Trail that penetrates the upper part of the hollow on Laurel Ridge. A couple days later I also heard several singing near First Field Trail.

All the areas are maturing deciduous forests — a preferred habitat for Acadian flycatchers. The hollow area could also be described as a ravine and has abundant beech trees — two other habitat preferences of Acadian flycatchers. The area near the First Field Trail qualifies as a swampy woods — still another favorite breeding locality for the birds.

Although Stan had made me acutely aware of the abundance of singing Acadian flycatchers on our property throughout the spring and early summer months, I could not definitely prove that they were breeding here in 1994. This year, however, I was luckier.

On June 12 I was walking up the hollow road in midday. Just below the big turn-out (about a quarter mile from the bottom of the mountain), an Acadian flycatcher began scolding me. I followed her with

my binoculars until she gave away her nest site — the tip of a beech tree branch overhanging the road about ten feet from the ground.

Her nest habitat exactly suited the description in the *Atlas of Breeding Birds in Pennsylvania*, which says, "... inhabits woodlands near streams, where it frequently builds in the pendant branches of a beech."

Furthermore, "in the northern counties the bird often is found in narrow valleys with hemlock-lined streams. . ." and frequently associates "with the Louisiana waterthrush and, in the north, sometimes in the same valleys as winter wrens." Certainly, our hollow has had breeding Louisiana waterthrushes for as long as we have lived here, and back in 1993 we had breeding winter wrens as well.

Unfortunately, I could not observe nesting behavior because first we had to attend our son Mark's wedding in Honduras and then I caught a nasty flu that lasted a couple weeks. But Stan did ask me to collect the nest after the birds had fledged for the Fort Roberdeau Nature Center's nest collection he was assembling.

Knowing that Acadian flycatchers incubate only one brood for 13-14 days and that they then fledge in 13-15 days, I asked our tallest son, Steve, to stand up in our truck bed and retrieve the nest on July 5. Instead, he found two fluffy youngsters still in the nest and a very unhappy mother. So we waited until July 23 when David and Bruce carefully pruned the limb holding the nest and brought it home to me.

The cup-shaped nest had been woven of bare hemlock twigs and catkins and bound with spider webs, a seemingly flimsy construction that I could see through. Yet it was strong enough to cradle the eggs and young of the first confirmed breeding Acadian flycatcher in Blair County.



**Please send your grocery receipts from Bi Lo Foods and Riverside Markets to Anne Borland at 138A Larch St., Hollidaysburg, PA 16648. She redeems the slips for \$\$\$ for the JVAS.**



## Did You Know?

- Of the 800 or so species of freshwater fish in the United States, the American Fisheries Society identifies 254 as being in danger of disappearing.
- Of the 245 species considered in the nationwide breeding bird survey by the National Biological Service, 130 have decreasing populations and 57 percent exhibit significant declines.
- The number of amphibian species showing documented or perceived declines increased from 38 in 1980 to 85 in 1994.

- In the last 60 years, the number of mussel species in the Upper Mississippi River declined by nearly 50 percent.

- From 1978 to 1990, coastal Louisiana wetlands were lost at a rate of 17,000 acres per year. Tampa Bay, Florida, lost 50 percent of its sea grasses between 1940 and 1983.

Source: "Our Living Resources," National Biological Service (NBS), 1995.

— PF

EDITOR'S NOTE: The deadline for October's issue of *The Gnatcatcher* is September 26. Please submit articles to editor Charlie Hoyer, P.O. Box 32, Tyrone, PA 16686-0032.

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**Juniata Valley Audubon Society**  
**R.R. 3, Box 866**  
**Altoona, PA 16601**



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## TOP 10 COMPANIES TO WRITE LETTERS TO:

The goal is to let these companies know that you, as a consumer of their product(s), support paying a small user fee added to their product that will be dedicated to wildlife conservation, outdoor recreation, and conservation education. Please address your letters to the CEO of the company.

**L.L. Bean, Inc.**

1 Casco Street  
Freeport, ME 04033  
Attn: Mr. Leon A. Gorman, President

**Recreational Equipment Inc. (REI)**

6750 South 228th Street  
Kent, WA 98032  
Attn: Mr. Wally Smith, President

**Coleman Outdoor Products Inc.**

250 N. St. Francis Ave.  
Wichita, KS 67202  
Attn: Mr. Michael Hammes, CEO

**Johnson Camping (owns Eureka, Camp Trails, Old Town Canoes, Carlisle Paddles, Silva Compasses, etc.)**

1326 Willow Road  
Sturtevant, WI 53177  
Attn: Mr. John Crabb, CEO

**Bausch & Lomb Sports Optics (includes Bushnell and Jason Empire Products)**

9200 Cody  
Overland Park, KS 66214  
Attn: Mr. Joseph B. Messner, President

**Eastman Kodak Co.**

343 State Street  
Rochester, NY 14650  
Attn: Mr. George M.C. Fisher,  
Chairman, CEO and President

**Nikon**

1300 Walt Whitman Rd.  
Melville, NY 11747  
Attn: Mr. H. Nakayama, CEO

**Pentax**

35 Iverness Dr., East  
Englewood, CO 80112  
Attn: Mr. Masa Tanaka, CEO

**The Nature Company**

750 Hearst Ave.  
Berkeley, CA 94710  
(510) 644-1337  
Attn: Mr. Ed Strobin, CEO

**Wild Birds Unlimited**

3003 E. 96th St.  
Indianapolis, IN 46420  
Attn: Mr. Jim Carpenter, CEO



**TEAMING WITH WILDLIFE**  
*a natural investment*



**Audubon Council Of Pennsylvania**  
*No Purchase Necessary*

**Suggested Donation--\$1.00 each or 12 for \$10.00**

ACP Supporters Drawing--*No Purchase Necessary*

Please Print

Protect migratory birds by supporting the Audubon Council of Pennsylvania. Programs include teacher training workshops, bird monitoring programs and habitat protection.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_

Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone ( ) \_\_\_\_\_

Return to: Audubon Council of PA  
1104 Fernwood Ave, #300  
Camp Hill, PA 17011

1st prize

One week at the Audubon Adult Ecology or Ornithology  
Camp in Maine. \*

2nd prize

"Snowy Egret" print by Artist Taylor Oughton

3rd prize

Library Collection--six superb books!

4th prize

One night for two at "Wingate Manor Bed & Breakfast"

5th prize

Victorinox Swiss Army Knife

\*Winner responsible for transportation to and from sites.

*Drawing October 21, 1995*

**Audubon Council Of Pennsylvania**  
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