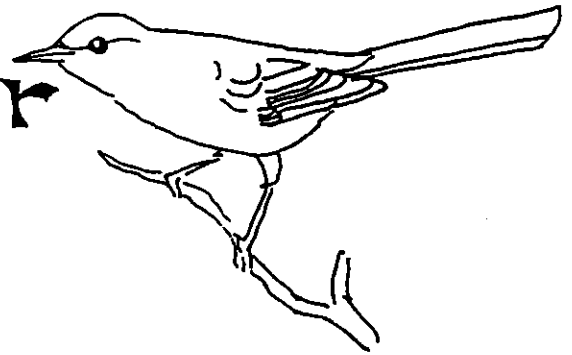


# The Gnatcatcher



Newsletter of the  
**Juniata Valley Audubon Society**

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

April 1996

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## **“Teaming With Wildlife” Legislation To Be Introduced in May**

*By Stan Kotala*

**A**S REGULAR *GNATCATCHER* READERS KNOW, “Teaming With Wildlife,” or the Wildlife Diversity Funding Initiative, is a proposal for a 5 percent surcharge to be added to the cost of outdoor recreation equipment for the purpose of funding nongame wildlife projects such as research and habitat acquisition and restoration. Pennsylvania’s share of this funding would be \$14 million per year for nongame programs to be administered by Pennsylvania’s Wild Resource Conservation Fund, the Pa. Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, the Pa. Game Commission, and the Pa. Fish and Boat Commission.

Last year we asked you to write letters supporting “Teaming With Wildlife” to the manufacturers of outdoor equipment. We sincerely thank all of you who did this. As a result of your letters, several major manufacturers have recently endorsed the Wildlife Diversity Funding Initiative.

Legislation to make this initiative a reality will be introduced in Congress early this May. We’re now asking you to write letters to your U.S. representatives and senators expressing your support for “Teaming With Wildlife.”

In your letter simply state that you support this initiative and emphasize that it operates on a user pay/user benefits system rather than a broad-based tax.

It’s critical that you write your letters this month. The International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, which is spearheading this initiative, won’t be able to work up this much national momentum again for at least another decade — so *this initiative must not fail!*

Address your letters to:

Representative Bud Shuster  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2188 Rayburn Office Bldg.  
Washington, DC 20515

Representative William F. Clinger  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2160 Rayburn House Office Bldg.  
Washington, DC 20515-3805

Senator Arlen Specter  
U.S. Senate  
331 Hart Senate Office Bldg.  
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Rick Santorum  
U.S. Senate  
283 Russell Senate Office Bldg.  
Washington, DC 20510-3803

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

*The JVAS will celebrate Earth Day by way of a month-long series of festivities starting with Beginning Birding walks on April 7, progressing through our gala banquet on April 8, a field trip to see the old-growth forest at Alan Seeger Natural Area on April 14, and trail hikes every weekend thereafter (see next column).*

*I hope that all JVAS members will take part in at least one of these events and share their love of the Earth.*

*Stan*

### **California Quarries in Sinking Valley Now Protected**

Recently Joe Gurekovich, of Sinking Valley, purchased the "California Quarries" along Elk Run for the purpose of preserving them for wildlife and providing wetlands for animals and birds, along with protecting the area's water supply. For the past 50 years this beautiful land was almost destroyed by persons dumping trash and waste.

Gurekovich, a veteran of the U.S. Marines and a retired security guard, has already removed some of the bulky items of trash such as tires, refrigerators, stoves, and TV sets. He, along with the Reese family and some friends, has adopted 2 miles of highway that runs through and beyond the 127-acre property. The State Police has been notified of the new ownership, the land has been posted, and the police will be patrolling the area for trespassers.

Gurekovich also has contacted the American Industrial Heritage Society, which will be investigating renewal of the historic areas of the California Quarries.

We commend Joe for his efforts to restore the wildlife habitat and wetlands along Elk Run.

### **April Program**

**ANNUAL SPRING BANQUET** — Marcia Bonta will present a splendid slide program based on her two books pertaining to "Outbound Journeys in Pennsylvania." (If you haven't sent your ticket reservations to Amy King by March 31, then you're too late to attend this spring's festivity.)

Social hour at 6 p.m. — turkey dinner at 6:30

**Monday, Apr. 8** in White Oak Hall at Fort Roberdeau County Park

### **Field Trips**

**BEGINNING BIRDING** at Tipton Wetland Demonstration Area, Old Rt. 220, Tipton. Trip leader: Stan Kotala (946-8840). Meet at site.

9 a.m., Sunday, Apr. 7

**NATURE HIKE** through Alan Seeger Natural Area at Rothrock State Forest, in Huntingdon Co. Trip leader: Stan Kotala (946-8840). Meet at Stan's house at noon or call 946-8840 to arrange meeting place.

Sunday, Apr. 14

**BEGINNING BIRDING** at Fort Roberdeau County Park. Trip leader: Stan Kotala (946-8840). Meet at park office.

2:30 p.m., Sunday, Apr. 21

**BIRD WALK** on Lower Trail. Trip leader: Dave Kyler (643-3030). Meet at Alexandria trail head.

8 a.m. to noon, Saturday, Apr. 27

**BEGINNING BIRDING** at Canoe Creek State Park. Trip leader: Stan Kotala (946-8840). Meet at Visitor Center.

8 a.m., Sunday, Apr. 28

**BEGINNING BIRDING** at Fort Roberdeau County Park. Trip leader: Stan Kotala (946-8840). Meet at park office.

2:30 p.m., Sunday, Apr. 28

**MOORE'S HILL TRAIL HIKE** at Canoe Creek State Park. Trip leader: Stan Kotala (946-8840). Meet at Visitor Center.

1 p.m., Sunday, May 5

### **Next Board Meeting**

7-9 p.m., Sunday, May 5 at President Stan Kotala's residence. Marci Mowery, executive director of the Audubon Council of Pa., will be present to discuss Audubon's Pa. Field Office. All members are welcome. Phone 946-8840 for directions.

## CONSERVATION

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### Thanks, Senator Specter!

As a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, Senator Arlen Specter of Pennsylvania is a key senator when budgets are determined for government programs. In recent weeks, the Senate has held hearings on funding for Fiscal Year 1997.

In the FY 96 budget (still to be passed) riders were attached to the Department of Interior budget. These riders weakened the Endangered Species Act by imposing a moratorium on the listing of new species; they also weakened protection for old-growth forests by allowing "salvage" cutting of timber. (The word *salvage* was so poorly defined in the rider that healthy trees are being cut.)

Despite many national polls that indicate that Americans are not willing to trade a balanced budget for cuts in environmental protection, the Congressional leadership has targeted several Department of Interior programs that protect birds, wildlife, and their habitats. Audubon staffers in Washington report that they expect funding for the following to be either eliminated or drastically reduced: the Endangered Species Act, the National Biological Service, and the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

#### *Endangered Species Act*

As we all know, this helps to protect the further decline of species already in trouble. The current moratorium on listing of new species has created a backlog of candidate species, some of which have populations of fewer than 50 individuals. Unless the moratorium is lifted, these species may become extinct. Audubon supports reasonable funding levels for prelisting and prevention activities, listing procedures, and recovery procedures. We also support land acquisition programs that would enable states to buy habitat from willing private property owners.

#### *National Biological Service*

The National Biological Service provides sound, unbiased, scientific information about wildlife and habitats. The National Wildlife Health Center, for example, monitors and responds to outbreaks of diseases such as rabies and avian cholera. The Patuxent Research Center monitors the health of the Chesapeake Bay ecosystem. Without information, it is impossible to make wise management decisions, so Audubon supports levels of funding that will allow our natural resources to be managed in scientifically defensible ways.

#### *Land and Water Conservation Fund*

The Land and Water Conservation Fund provides money for acquisition of priority habitats from willing private sellers. The Everglades National Park (Fla.), Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge (W.V.), Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge (Alaska), and Lower Rio Grande Valley National Wildlife Refuge (Tex.) are just four of more than 20 sites Audubon has identified as priorities for protection. Without adequate funds, these sites will not be protected.

#### *What's our Senator got to do with it?*

In late March, Senator Specter stood up to the Congressional leadership and voted to protect Utah's wilderness areas. We need to thank him for this. Pressure from lobbyists and members of Congress who wanted to open these areas to mining and other commercial interests was intense.

Senator Specter, on March 13, voted against an amendment offered by Senator Kay Bailey Hutchinson, R-Tex., that would have restored "emergency" listings of endangered species. Hutchinson's amendment included a budget of \$1. (Yes, one dollar. That's not a typo!)

While we are thanking him for standing these stands, we need to remind him that we want him to also stand for real protection of endangered species, for serious studies and inventories of our natural resources, and for the acquisition of wilderness, wetlands, beaches, and other open spaces that provide habitat for wildlife and recreation for increasing numbers of people.

Please take a moment or two and write or call Senator Specter's office. Thank him for his recent votes on behalf of wildlife and habitats and urge him to continue to stand up to the extremists who would continue to cut funding for programs that are vital to our birds, wildlife, and natural areas.

Senator Specter's address is:

The Honorable Arlen Specter  
303 Hart Senate Bldg.

U.S. Senate Phone: (202) 224-4254  
Washington, DC 20510 Fax: (202) 224-2893

From Kathleen Rogers' testimony before the U.S. House of Representatives Subcommittee on Interior Appropriations:

In the United States, more than 60 million people identify themselves as bird-watchers — more than 20 times the number of U.S. duck hunters. More than \$10

[ *Cont'd on page 5* ]

### Little Scrapper

I never thought it. I never dreamed the time would come when I would see "my little friend," the Song Sparrow, fighting with another bird. But come it did. And that on a cold, snowy, winter morning just before Christmas!

It was late when I came home from downtown that afternoon — in fact, almost time to get supper. The sun had already set, its orange glow standing out against the deep blue sky, while high above was the crescent moon. Though it was twilight, I decided to put feed out for my feathered friends anyway. Different times I had seen them eating at the feeder or on the ground before retiring for the night. So I half-filled the feeder, sprinkled seed behind the forsythia bushes and on top of the upper brick wall. Perhaps they would like a bedtime snack. If so, it was right there.

A look through the glass in the basement door showed how wrong I was. Darkness was closing in. The feathered folk had all gone except for one lonely little bird — my little friend, the Song Sparrow. He was scratching for seeds left by the other birds. However, he left before I opened the basement door. Since birds have a hard time finding food in the winter, I should have fed them earlier, I thought.

As I looked out the lower kitchen window the next morning, I saw "my little friend," the Song Sparrow. He was eating seed in the upper end of the bird feeder, but sharing it with Silvester Junco. Rather unusual for a little aristocrat who likes to keep to himself.

Later he flew down to the ground where I had put seed behind the forsythia bushes. Since this is his favorite eating spot, he sometimes regards it as exclusively his. And this is where the donnybrook started.

"My little friend," the Song Sparrow was in a foul mood that morning. When he saw three members of the J.B. House Sparrow family eating seed in his dining area and especially trespassing on his turf, he chased two of them off his property. House Sparrow No. 3 he had a fight with. That member of J.B.'s family was determined to stand his ground. No bird was going to drive him off.

So the fight began. With their wings partly spread open, the Song Sparrow and his intruder flew at each other. For a few minutes they fought like two bantam roosters, flying up and down at each other's heads. Finally, the House Sparrow gave in and left. No casualties. "My Little Friend," the Song Sparrow had won the day. He had that piece of ground all to himself. Now he could eat in peace.

Little scrapper? Fighter, perhaps, would be more appropriate.

— Rachel Chipperfield  
Altoona

### BOOK REVIEWS



*Pennsylvania Wildlife: A Viewer's Guide*  
by Kathy and Hal Korber  
1994, Northwoods Publications, \$12.95

*Endangered and Threatened Species of Pennsylvania*  
by Frank Felbaum *et al*  
1995, Wild Resource Conservation Fund  
(P.O. Box 8764, Harrisburg, PA 17105-8764)

OK, here's the deal: the Wild Resource Conservation Fund — the same folks who sell those groovy license plates with the owls — have sponsored both these books. Money from the sale of the first book helps support the fund, while the second seems to be available, mainly to journalists, educators and policy-makers, upon request. (Terry Wentz asked me to say that both these books are available at Canoe Creek or other state parks, where some of the purchase money will also go to support park naturalists.) Now for the reviews.

So far, my rule of thumb in choosing books for this column has been, "If you can't say something good about a book, don't review it." *Pennsylvania Wildlife: A Viewer's Guide* sorely tests this ethos. There's a pretty nifty two-page illustration of seasonal wildlife events, by the inimitable Bob Sopchick, in the introduction. And there are lots of glossy color photos. Other than that, this book has little to recommend it. The writing is poor, no copy editing seems to have been done (witness the full-page photo of a great horned owl labeled "barred owl"), there's no index, and the regional maps and the directions to each viewing spot are woefully inadequate. In addition, I have a problem with the guiding assumptions of the Watchable Wildlife Program, the nationwide initiative that helped spawn this travesty: the idea seems to be that the only way to get people to appreciate nature is to make the whole outdoors into one big "Wild Kingdom" episode. Well, I hate to say it, but critters are *always* livelier, cuter and closer on the ol' boob tube! Plus, watching wildlife from the safety and comfort of your couch doesn't burn a whole lot of fossil fuels.

The second book, however, is a different story. Although at only 80 pages, with one species per page, there's room for just a small fraction of the threatened and endangered plants (vertebrates account for three quarters of the species included), this is still a very worthwhile publication. Each entry features a color photo, a map of historical and recent occurrences, and five paragraphs headed as follows: Identifying Characteristics; Biology-Natural History; Preferred Habitat; Reasons for Being Threatened/Endangered (perhaps the most interesting sections, particularly taken in aggregate); Management Programs. And although written by committee, this book doesn't suffer from the kind of editorial problems found in the other. Activists should find it an especially useful resource ("Hey congressman, what about the endangered Longnose Sucker?"). And it's just the sort of book to make you want to go poking around in the back forty.

— Dave Bonta

## Signs of Spring

Spring began for us on March 16 when our first grandchild — Eva Luz — was born in Tegucigalpa, Honduras to our son Mark and his wife Luz. That same day the woods here were luminous and the first green shoots on the sunny side of the house promised the birth of another spring.

But on St. Patrick's Day every smidgeon of green was covered once again in snow. Despite three fresh inches, though, I dared to think of it as a "spring snow." Only in spring would hundreds of blackbirds — mostly common grackles, with a few European starlings, brown-headed cowbirds, and red-winged blackbirds — fall like black rain onto the back porch, feeders, steps and ground below, blanketing the area while the feeder regulars fled. The flock swept in and out for 20 minutes before most of them took off for good.

Only a pair of cowbirds and two dozen red-winged blackbirds remained throughout the day. So did three pine siskins, a fox sparrow, and a goldfinch. Many of the feeder regulars — cardinals, house finches, song sparrows, mourning doves, tufted titmice, dark-eyed juncos, and black-capped chickadees — sang their spring songs in the midst of the snow.

I went walking while it was still snowing in midmorning. First I flushed a ruffed grouse and

then, from a snow-covered mountain laurel shrub, an American woodcock. Along the Far Field Road I spotted an owl-like shape in a tangle of grapevines that swathed the top of a large tree. It was a great horned owl watching me as I watched it through my binoculars. Finally, realizing that its hiding place had been discovered, it flew off awkwardly flapping its wings.

Later, near dusk, four deer that had already changed their gray winter coats for their brown spring ones, foraged in the flat area below our house, pulling up the fresh blades of grass growing beside the stream.

All the creatures I saw that day, and in the cold, snowy days that followed, seemed as convinced as I was that spring was here — the turkey vultures tilting in the March winds over Sapsucker Ridge, the hundreds of red-winged blackbirds singing in the thick dawn fog, the killdeer and ring-billed gulls crying high in the sky, the wavering V-shaped flocks of geese streaming north, the robins foraging in First Field, and the ruffed grouse drumming during a snow squall.

No matter how many reverses we have over the next few weeks, we and the wildlife know that the season of birth is here. Welcome, Eva Luz, to our family.



### ... Senator Specter [Cont'd from page 3]

billion were directly spent on expenses related to feeding, watching, and enjoying birds in the U.S. in 1991, generating a total economic effect of \$15.9 billion, including \$300 million in direct state revenues and 190,000 full and part-time jobs. Bird-related tourism has a significant impact on isolated and rural communities. Birders from 17 states and 20 Ohio counties visited the Magee Wildlife Area in the last few years, spending an estimated \$5.61 million in the local community. Birders are the primary users for Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge in New Mexico, contributing over \$3 million to the local economy. A University of Arizona study showed that two birding "hot spots" in southern Arizona attracted approximately 38,000 visitors in 1991, who spent \$1.6 million in the local community, helping to provide incomes to 56 families.

— PF

**Don't forget to send your BiLo Foods and Riverside Markets cash register tapes to Anne Borland at 138A Larch St., Hollidaysburg, PA 16648.  
Anne redeems the tapes for \$\$\$ for the JVAS.**

### Blair County Envirothon Set At Fort Roberdeau Park

An envirothon is a competition among high school teams that are tested on topics such as wildlife, aquatics, soils, and forestry. It's initially conducted on a county-wide basis. The winning team from each county advances to state competition; state winners take part in the national finals.

The JVAS is sponsoring Blair County's Envirothon, which will take place Thursday, Apr. 25 from 9 a.m. till noon at Fort Roberdeau County Park in Sinking Valley. Volunteers are needed to help man the test stations where they will work with representatives of the Pa. Game Commission,

the Pa. Fish and Boat Commission, the Natural Resource Conservation Service, and the Pa. Bureau of Forestry. If you'd like to help, please call Stan Kotala at 946-8840 or just join other JVAS members at the Fort on the 25th!

### North American Migration Count

This year's North American Migration Count (NAMC) will be held on Saturday, May 11. The NAMC is a county-based census of birds, taking place on the same day across the nation. If you'd like to participate in the Blair Co. NAMC, call Stan Kotala at 946-8840 so that he can send you the appropriate forms.

### Macroinvertebrate Workshop To Be Conducted at Dickinson

ALLARM (ALLiance for Aquatic Resource Monitoring) will be conducting a Macroinvertebrate Workshop at 10 a.m., Saturday, May 4 at Dickinson College in Carlisle. The workshop will be conducted outside, wading into streams to collect bugs, and inside, using microscopes and other lab equipment to identify samples.

Participants will learn how to assess stream quality by looking at the macroinvertebrate population living there.

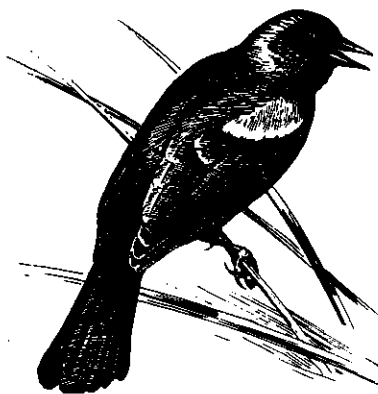
If you're interested in participating, contact Todd Schively at (717) 245-1565 by Apr. 20 for directions and more info.

EDITOR'S NOTE: The deadline for May's issue of *The Gnatcatcher* is May 1. Please submit articles to editor Charlie Hoyer, P.O. Box 32, Tyrone, PA 16686.

PRINTED BY WICK COPY CENTER, 503 E. PLANK RD., ALTOONA

**Juniata Valley Audubon Society**  
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Altoona, Pa.  
Permit No. 238



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Newsletter Editor, JVAS  
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Tyrone

04/97

PA 16686-0032

## JVAS Site Guide No. 2: Detweiler's Run Natural Area

By Greg Grove

A deep ravine lies between Thickhead and Grass Mountains in the Seven Mountains Area of Huntingdon and Centre counties. Detweiler's Run, rising high in the mountains, tumbles through this secluded valley, bubbling and gurgling as it descends, cascading at times over rocks forming miniature waterfalls, and then occasionally pausing in small pools of crystal clarity. The stream is flanked by thick stands of rhododendron and overseen by stately hemlocks. Tall white pines stand nearby, a few well on their way to at least semi-ancient status; their offspring vie for room to grow and light-space to photosynthesize. This is a place I would visit frequently even if there were no birds. But from mid-May through the breeding season, birds make Detweiler's Run all the more special.

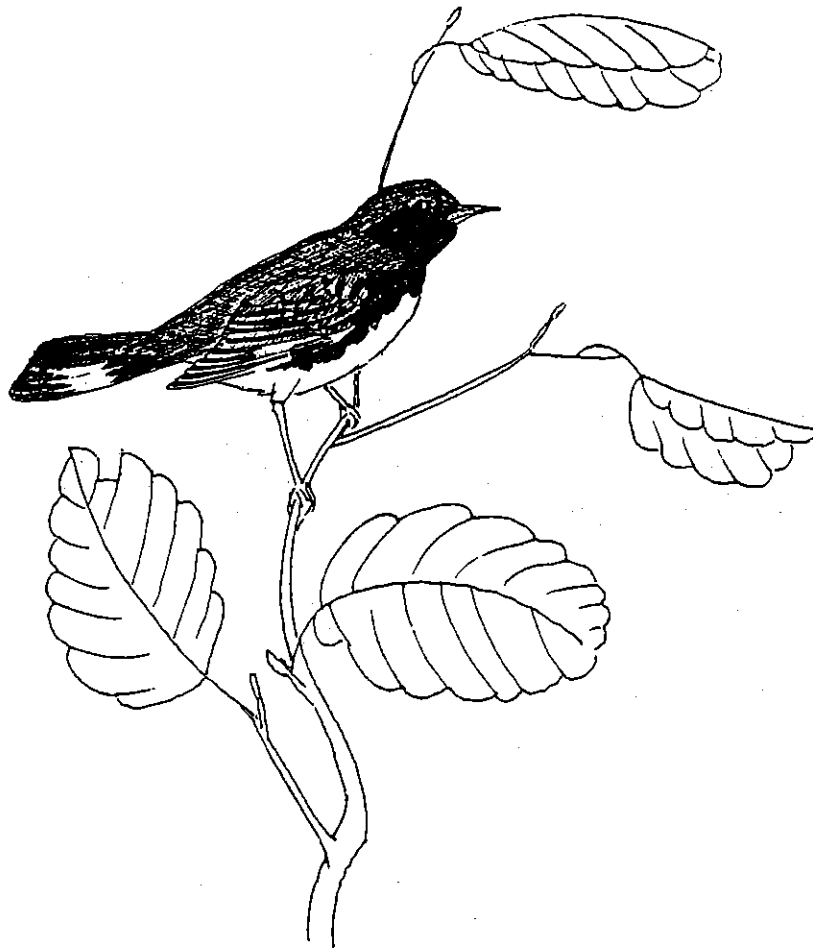
A well-maintained trail (part of the Mid-State Trail system) parallels the stream. At times the trail lies beside the stream and the noise of the rushing water dominates your senses. At other places, the trail meanders a bit up the slope. I seldom meet other humans in Detweiler's Run though the trail is clearly used and maintained. Except for the trail

and a couple footbridges, there is not much to suggest human presence. Instead, there is a sense of pre-colonial wilderness when I hike up the trail. It's a place in which to think clearly, or not at all; to free your mind of the materialism, the artificiality,

and the dullness that defines so many of the activities of our own species. You come out from a hike in Detweiler's with a lifted spirit, ready to face *Homo sapiens* once again, but convinced that answers to questions about the "meaning of life" are probably to be found back there in the woods — remote from concrete, electrical appliances, and the six o'clock news.

If long bird lists are your priority, Detweiler's is not for you.

There is no pool large enough to attract waterfowl or waders (or motorboats) and no mudflats to interest sandpipers. There are only birds of the deep forest. Even at that, for half the year outside of breeding and migration, you may struggle to hit double figures on your trip list; chickadees may outnumber all other birds combined between November and March. (But when your path is lined by fresh, clean snow layered delicately onto dark green hemlock and pine



boughs, you may temporarily forget the paucity of birds.)

However, if you are partial to breeding warblers, you will enjoy birding at Detweiler's in June, though numerically your list will still be modest. I have reliably found singing males of the following warbler species in each of the last three summers (in approximate descending order of abundance): Ovenbird, Canada, Black-throated Blue, American Redstart, Common Yellowthroat, Worm-eating, Black-and-white, and Louisiana Waterthrush.

Other definite or potential breeders (again in descending order) are Red-eyed Vireo, Acadian Flycatcher, Scarlet Tanager, Wood Thrush, Veery, Eastern Wood Pewee, Winter Wren, Solitary Vireo, Black-capped Chickadee, Great-crested Flycatcher, Brown Creeper, Rufous-sided Towhee, Downy, Hairy, and Pileated woodpeckers, White-breasted Nuthatch, Golden-crowned Kinglet, and Dark-eyed Junco.

I occasionally glimpse or hear Broad-winged Hawk, Ruffed Grouse, Wild Turkey, and Common Raven. On one memorable early June morning I chanced upon two adult and two young Barred Owls on some sort of noisy family outing. I watched them for 15 minutes before they tired of my company and moved on.

I must emphasize that birding in Detweiler's is primarily by ear. If you insist on seeing lots of birds, you will have to work a bit. It is best to let the birds announce themselves and perhaps occasionally catch one unaware. The Hooded and Canada

warblers and Acadian Flycatchers sing almost by your side, near the trail, and are therefore somewhat easier to see. The Winter Wren, Veery, Wood Thrush, Black-throated Blue Warbler, and Ovenbird sing farther off the trail and require more effort to find. The Blackburnian and Black-throated Green warblers require near heroic patience and neck-bending for a split-second flash high in the overlapping boughs of tall hemlocks.

Detweiler's does not appear to be a great migrant trap — at least for warblers. However, spring and especially fall migration may bring lots of thrushes, including Hermit, Swainson's, and Gray-cheeked and sometimes (in October) American Robins by the hundreds. Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers may be found in spring and fall, and Winter Wrens are easier to see during fall than during breeding season.

Bear Meadows and Alan Seeger Natural Areas are within a few minutes drive of Detweiler's. Each offers good birding — again, primarily during spring and summer. All three natural areas are embedded within Rothrock State Forest in the Seven Mountains area of Huntingdon, Centre, and Mifflin Counties. The best way to navigate the mountain roads in this area is with a Pennsylvania Gazetteer or the USGS topographic maps for McAlevy's Fort, Barrville, and State College. For more information, feel free to write or call me. ●

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