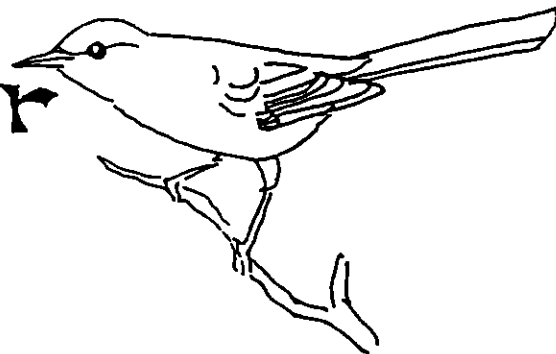


The Gnatcatcher



Newsletter of the Juniata Valley Audubon Society

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

Vol. 29, No. 8 — November 1997

JVAS Receives \$550 Grant For "Stream Class"

By Stan Kotala

Stream Class, the Juniata Valley Audubon Society's aquatic resource education project, taught by President Stan Kotala, has been awarded a grant for \$550. The money was awarded to the JVAS through the Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts in conjunction with the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and Region III of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in recognition of our Education Committee's efforts relating to the quality of our streams.

Stream Class was started by the JVAS Education Committee in the spring of 1997 and has been presented to more than 400 students. Its goal is to encourage participants to view streams as reflections of watershed activities. It stresses the analysis of benthic macroinvertebrate populations as an easy and accurate method of assessing stream health. Great emphasis is placed on enabling citizens to recognize activities that are detrimental to watersheds and empowering those citizens to take action to protect their watershed from degradation.

The grant will allow the JVAS Education Committee to purchase materials that will enhance the effectiveness of our Stream Class presentations and enable them to reach a greater audience than ever before.

Stream Class can be scheduled for any time of year and has the option of including a field trip to a local stream for a hands-on learning experience. If your group is interested in having Stream Class presented to it, you may call JVAS Education Chair Alice Kotala or President Stan Kotala at 946-8840.

November Program

"BATS OF CANOE CREEK." Dr. Michael Gannon, professor at the Altoona Campus of Pennsylvania State University, will present research findings about the bats of Canoe Creek.

7:30 P.M., Monday, Nov. 17 at the visitor center, Canoe Creek State Park, off Rte 22 east of Hollidaysburg.

Field Trips

HIKE THROUGH THE LITTLE JUNIATA NATURAL AREA in the Rothrock State Forest, near Barree. (See President's Message on page 2 for additional info.) Preregister with trip leader Stan Kotala at 946-8840.

2-4 P.M., Sunday, Nov. 16

1997 CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT. Bill King, coordinator. Phone 942-7673. (See page 6 for details.)

Saturday, Dec. 27

Next Board Meeting

7 P.M., Monday, Feb. 2, 1998 at the Kotalas' residence. All members are welcome. Phone Stan at 946-8840 for directions.

The Gnatcatcher

is published eight times a year (in February, March, April, May, June, September, October, and November) by the

Juniata Valley Audubon Society
Charlie Hoyer, Editor
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Articles may be submitted directly to the editor. The deadline for the February 1998 issue is Monday, January 20.

The Juniata Valley Audubon Society (JVAS) is a chapter of the National Audubon Society serving members in Bedford, Blair, Fulton, Huntingdon, and Mifflin Counties.

Program meetings of the JVAS are held in the Visitor Center at Canoe Creek State Park, near Hollidaysburg, on the third Monday of the month in February, March, May, June, September, October, and November at 7:30 p.m. (A business meeting is at 7:15.) The public is invited to attend.

The JVAS Board of Directors holds its meetings, which are open to any concerned JVAS member, as announced in *The Gnatcatcher*.

For membership information, please contact Charlie Hoyer at 684-7376.

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Historian Barb Baird 946-0256

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Fund-raising Director . . . Anne Borland 695-9718
Director of Ornithology . . . Bill King 942-7673
Director Dave Kyler 643-6030

From the President's Desk

In celebration of the JVAS receiving a \$550 grant for our Stream Class initiative, the JVAS Education Committee will lead a field trip to the Little Juniata Natural Area in the Rothrock State Forest, near Barree, on Sunday, November 16 from 2 to 4 P.M.

The Little Juniata Natural Area encompasses 624 acres of forested hillside flanking both sides of the Little Juniata River where it forms a "water gap" through Tussey Mountain. We'll follow the relatively level trail on the northern side of the stream from the parking lot into the heart of the natural area and back — a round-trip of three miles.

I hope to see all of you there as we celebrate the third grant that the JVAS has received this year.

Call me at 946-8840 to arrange a meeting place or join us at the Little Juniata Natural Area parking lot a 2 P.M. on Sunday, November 16.

Stan Kotala

Drinking Water Economics

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) reported in January that the nation must spend at least \$138.6 billion over the next twenty years to provide safe drinking water for its citizens. Included is \$36.2 billion that municipalities will spend to remove contaminants from water.

The analysis ignores, however, the use of land acquisition and other watershed protection measures to prevent the contamination while saving billions. A report by the Trust for Public Land, "Protecting the Source," (free, (800) 714-5263; summary at www.tpl.org/tpl) calls on the EPA and the states to hike spending for watershed protection.

Some states already have strong programs: New York City is investing \$1.5 billion to protect its watershed while avoiding \$8 billion in filtration costs; Dade County, Fla. imposed a three percent surcharge on water bills to protect its watershed; Providence, R.I. collects a special water tax to buy watershed land; and Spokane, Wash. collects \$15 yearly from property owners to protect its aquifers. ❖

— From *Common Ground*, Sep/Oct 1997 Issue
Newsletter of The Conservation Fund

CONSERVATION
CORNER
By Paula Ford
Focus on National Forests

On October 15 Judge William Standish, a U.S. District Court judge in Pittsburgh, ruled that the U.S. Forest Service must stop timber cutting on the Allegheny National Forest pending the completion of an environmental impact statement. The Allegheny National Forest had planned to sell timber off 5,000 acres this year, including something called the Mortality II sale. The judge's ruling follows a lawsuit filed by the Pennsylvania Chapter of the Sierra Club, the Allegheny Defense Project, and Heartwood. The lawsuit mentioned the use of herbicides, clear-cutting, road construction, and the destruction of habitat for endangered bats.

In his decision, Judge Standish said the large amount of acreage to be cut warranted a detailed study of its impact on the environment. Standish also said that the Forest Service should consider other alternatives to timber cutting. The Forest Service had considered only two alternative plans.

**BIPARTISAN BILL TO END FEDERAL TIMBER PROGRAM
TO BE INTRODUCED**

In a move to protect what habitat remains on national forests and other federal public lands, Reps. Cynthia McKinney (D-Ga.) and Jim Leach (R-Iowa) will introduce the National Forest Protection and Restoration Act (NFPRA) into Congress. The bill will end the timber sales program nationwide on National Forests, Bureau of Land Management lands, and National Wildlife Refuges nationwide — phasing it out over two years. It will also redirect timber subsidies into worker retraining, ecological restoration (with a hiring preference for dislocated timber workers), and deficit reduction.

Supporters of the bill are calling their representatives and urging them to become original cosponsors of the legislation. ❖

SAMPLE LETTER TO THE EDITOR

(Provided by the NAS)

Date
*Editor
Newspaper
City, State, Zip*

Dear Editor:

Now that Congress is hammering out the federal budget and appropriations for 1998, there are some issues that all members of Congress should support. Eliminating industry subsidies that also cause damage to the environment is definitely an issue that should find strong bipartisan support. One of these environmentally harmful "sweetheart deals" are taxpayer-funded subsidies that ruin our priceless forests to provide a benefit to large logging corporations.

As a taxpayer, I do not wish my money to be allocated toward further destruction of our National Forests. Under the current system, private companies can log public trees for their own profit, while the taxpayer foots the bill to build the roads for the logging. In fact, the Government Accounting Office estimated that the U.S. Forest Service lost \$1 billion of taxpayer money between fiscal years 1992 and 1994. Building roads to benefit private industry is a considerable portion of this loss. The Forest Service has since kept up the wasteful use of tax dollars. In 1995, the President's Council of Economic Advisors showed that the Forest Service lost \$234 million. Once the logging roads are built, the public is left with other damaging and costly repairs: denuded forests, dangerous mud slides, silted water, and destroyed fish and wildlife habitat.

The Forest Service has admitted that it cannot even maintain the 377,000 miles of logging roads it has already built. They report a \$440 million backlog in road maintenance. Does it make sense to build more expensive mountain roads on steep, unstable slopes for the benefit of logging corporations?

If Representative x is really serious about balancing the budget and ending corporate welfare, voting to eliminate timber road subsidies will prove it. The money saved can be better spent elsewhere.

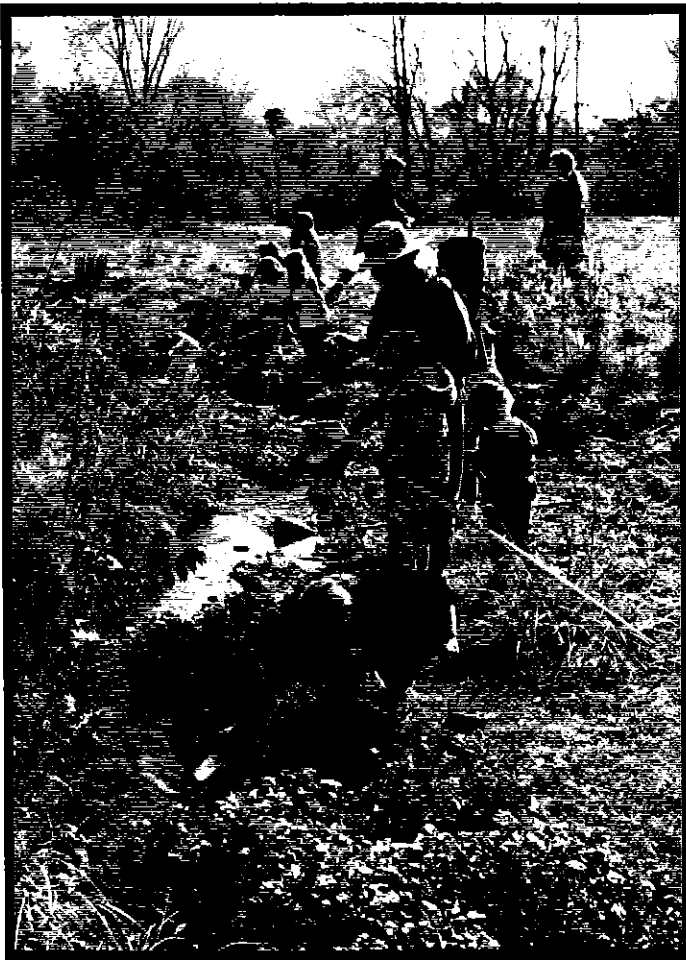
*Name
Address
City, State, Zip
Phone*

JVAS Education Field Trip to Millbrook Marsh

October 11, 1997

Photos and Text
By Stan Kotala

The JVAS Education Committee led girl scouts of Talus Rock Troop 1215 on a trip to Millbrook Marsh, Centre County's new regional nature center.



JVAS Education Committee member *Jody Wallace (wearing straw hat)* assists scouts with the identification of benthic macro-invertebrates.



JVAS Education Chair *Alice Kotala* discusses the life history of the monarch butterfly with scouts *Helena Kotala (left)* and *Marie Garofoli*.

Bluebirds and Sternagle

Beryl Sternagle was selected for the 1997 State Parks Bluebird Monitor of the Year award recently. Beryl has been a monitor for twelve years at Canoe Creek. She answered the call to fill in when another monitor became seriously ill in 1986.

Beryl has religiously checked boxes since 1986 and keeps thorough records for the ones she monitors. In 1993 Beryl successfully convinced her husband Al to help, and the two of them have enjoyed this joint activity ever since. Al has become an avid birder because of Beryl's enthusiasm. Their bird list was included in the Canoe Creek Resources Management Plan.

Other activities for which Beryl has volunteered include the Pennsylvania breeding bird atlas, 1984 to 1989. Her study block included Canoe Creek State Park. She also volunteers for the local chapter of the American Cancer Society and has computerized many of their records for them. Beryl's latest project over the past several years has been writing a history of the Samuel Moore family, who were among the initial settlers in this area. This interest was spurred when Al and Beryl purchased a Moore home for their residence. Beryl's research has helped to piece together the park history.

Additional monitors for the seventy-seven boxes include: Alline German, Debbie Haine, Mary Jo Passmore, Karen Stanley, Terry Wentz, and Trudy White. Canoe Creek always has a need for volunteers to assist with various programs throughout the park. Among other JVAS members, Stan Kotala and Dan Sinal have volunteered during 1997 to assist with the environmental education program. If you are interested in volunteering, call the park office phone number at 695-6807.

BLUEBIRD STATISTICS

The bluebird monitoring program at Canoe Creek State Park has been the impetus for reestablishing bluebirds in the Scotch Valley and Turkey Valley areas adjacent to the park. Bill Rosevear, current park manager of Pine Grove Furnace State

Park and charter member of the JVAS, initiated the installation of bluebird boxes at Canoe Creek in 1983. Since this inception, the JVAS has supplied volunteers to monitor and repair boxes. The two most important factors contributing to the success of bluebirds is proper habitat and maintenance of the boxes.

The Canoe Creek program has passed the fifteen-year mark in 1997. Statistics over the life of the program are provided in the table. During the fifteen-year span, a grand total of 1,415 bluebirds have successfully fledged from the boxes. In addition, an equal number of tree swallows and numerous house wrens have fledged from boxes not used by bluebirds.

Bluebirds - Canoe Creek Summary

Year	Boxes	Eggs	Hatch	Fledge
1983	31	41	23	15
1984	58	60	55	46
1985	73	196	140	109
1986	76	166	129	126
1987	71	174	137	128
1988	70	188	158	148
1989	70	189	138	109
1990	79	176	143	105
1991	80	177	143	135
1992	78	150	96	83
1993	78	92	72	70
1994	77	143	117	88
1995	77	121	100	95
1996	77	132	92	82
1997	77	132	104	76
15 years				1,415

The first peek at a featherless, helpless hatchling gets you hooked. Most bluebird monitors adopt these creatures as if they are their own children. And it's devastating to find your first group of little ones dead from parasites or weather factors. Get involved; monitor some bluebird houses. It's lots of fun! ❖

— Terry Wentz

Butterfly Plant of the Month — Blazing Star

By Alice Kotala

Liatris spicata, known as dense blazing star or gay feather, is rated as one of the top ten nectar plants for the butterfly garden. In addition to being an effective attractant of adult butterflies looking for a nectar meal, the *Liatris* flower form and foliage add an interesting accent to the garden landscape. In mid-to-late summer *Liatris spicata* produces tall spikes of lavender flower clusters rising from dense clumps of thin, grasslike leaves. It contrasts beautifully against the season's profusion of gold blooms such as goldenrod and black-eyed Susan, which also are preferred nectar sources for butterflies.

Once established in the garden, *Liatris* needs little care. It thrives in moist, fertile soil in a sunny location; but remains attractive in poor, dry soils — it just doesn't grow as tall. Height ranges from one to five feet. Propagation can be by root division in early spring or by seed. Simply cut the ripe seed stalk in the fall, lay it down in the seedbed, and cover with about one-half inch of soil. Seedlings will appear in the spring.

Liatris spicata is a member of the aster family (*Asteraceae*), is hardy to climate zone 2, and is found in meadows and marsh edges from Wisconsin, Michigan, southwestern Ontario, Pennsylvania, and northern New Jersey southward. ❖



Opportunity for Birders Who Garden for Wildlife

Ursula Sherrill, a Penn State student working with Dr. Margaret Brittingham, wants to interview anyone who has planted shrubs and trees in their yard to provide food and cover for birds. Ursula is working on a project to determine whether or not wildlife plantings work to draw birds into the yard. Your participation is welcomed. If you would like to help, call Ursula at 234-2069. ❖

'97 JVAS Christmas Bird Count Set

The JVAS-sponsored 1997 Christmas Bird Count will be held Saturday, December 27 — the Saturday after Christmas. Everyone is invited to participate.

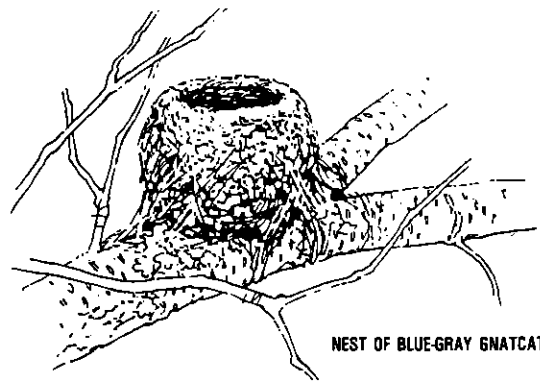
JVAS Ornithology Director and CBC Coordinator Bill King will have maps and tally sheets at the November program meeting (Nov. 17) for all. If you need more information or encouragement, call Bill at 942-7673.

After the day's counts, we'll warm up, tally the counts, and enjoy a covered-dish supper at Marge and Charlie Hoyer's home on Brush Mountain at Skelp. If snow prevents access up the driveway, a last-minute change will be made. ❖

— BK

Second Edition of Birds' Nests Field Guide

A Guide to the Nests, Eggs, and Nestlings of North American Birds, second edition, by Paul J. Baicich and Colin J.O. Harrison, is a completely rewritten edition of Harrison's 1978 book with much expanded text giving details on the breeding cycle of each species, summarized in a natural sequence: nest habitat, nest-site, nest construction, breeding season, eggs, incubation, and nesting and nestling period. Covered are some 669 breeding birds of Canada and the U.S.A. Forty-eight color plates show the eggs of 597 species; sixteen color plates show representative nestlings; and more than 100 black-and-white drawings show nests, nestlings, and identification keys. \$22.95 (paperback), 1997, from Academic Press (800-321-5068) or your local bookseller. ❖



NEST OF BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER

The Right Thing!

Sometimes, "doing the right thing" can be bittersweet. "The right thing," one blue and gold morning in late September, was doing my usual forty-five minutes of back exercises instead of going for an early morning walk with Bruce before we headed to an all-day meeting. Of course, I would have rather taken that walk, but I knew that the exercising was imperative because I would be sitting most of the day.

Then, as I was resentfully performing my boring exercises in the upstairs hall, I idly glanced out the window. An immature sharp-shinned hawk was busy chasing gray squirrels, flaring its tail feathers as it stumble-ran after them on the ground. Since it was no bigger than the squirrels, they either ignored the raptor or mock-rushed it. I ran downstairs for my binoculars and returned to sit in the hall for what turned out to be a half hour's entertainment.

No doubt the sharpie was one of the youngsters that had been raised in a hidden nest on Laurel Ridge — youngsters that I heard and saw for several weeks in August, calling and flying beside Laurel Ridge Trail, and then mobbing a parent whenever it appeared with food. Now, the youngster in our yard was on its own and had not yet figured out what foods were suitable for a bird of its size.

By Marcia Bonta

It flew up into a black walnut tree where its head swiveled back and forth as it watched five gray squirrels foraging for black walnuts on the ground beneath the bird's perch. Then one squirrel deliberately climbed up the black walnut tree and out on the branch where the sharpie sat, facing it head to head as if it were trying to impress the small raptor with its superior size. To me, though, it seemed to be a squirrel's equivalent of thumbing its nose at the bumbling youngster.

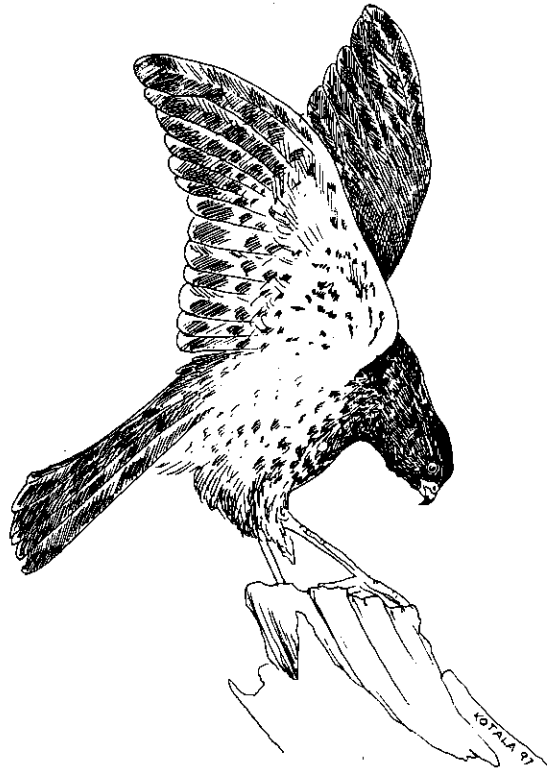
Despite the squirrel's actions, the sharpie was a slow learner. Over the next half hour, it tried three more ground chases without success. Finally, the bird flew off when Bruce came back from his walk.

I was filled with righteous happiness, having done the right thing and still been rewarded. But Bruce managed to upstage me.

"I had a great view of a gray fox hunting along the Sapsucker Woods Trail," he said.

To a gray fox lover like me, missing such a sight was a disappointment. On the other hand, after searching the literature, I discovered that no one had ever reported watching a sharpie hunt gray squirrels, so, as a

confirmed behavior-watcher, I *had* been amply rewarded for "doing the right thing."



Send your BiLo Foods and Riverside Markets cash register tapes to Anne Borland at 138A Larch St., Hollidaysburg, PA 16648. Anne redeems tapes for \$ for the JVAS. Thank you!

DEP Announces Intent to Sue EPA on Clean Air Standards

On behalf of Gov. Tom Ridge, Environmental Protection Secretary James M. Seif last month announced that Pennsylvania intends to sue the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to require the agency to take action to reduce air pollution coming into Pennsylvania from other states.

In a petition filed with the EPA, Gov. Ridge asked the agency to take action to reduce emissions from large fossil-fuel fired combustion units and electric generating facilities in nineteen southern and midwestern states. The petition requests that the EPA establish specific emission limitations and reductions on the affected units in those other states, as well as a schedule for compliance if necessary.

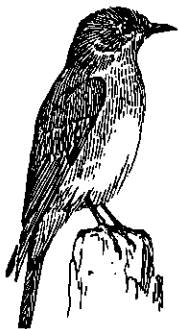
The EPA also received petitions from seven other states. Seif said Pennsylvania plans to file a notice of intent to sue if the EPA takes no effective action on the petition.

"The notice of intent to sue is part of Pennsylvania's continued effort to get the EPA and other states to do their share when it come to air emissions causing ozone violation in Pennsylvania," Ridge said. "Even with the significant steps that Pennsylvania already has taken to reduce our emissions, it is clear we cannot achieve the national health-based standard for ozone if the issue of dirty air coming into Pennsylvania from other states is not addressed." ❖

— From Oct. 10 *Update*, newsletter of the DEP

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