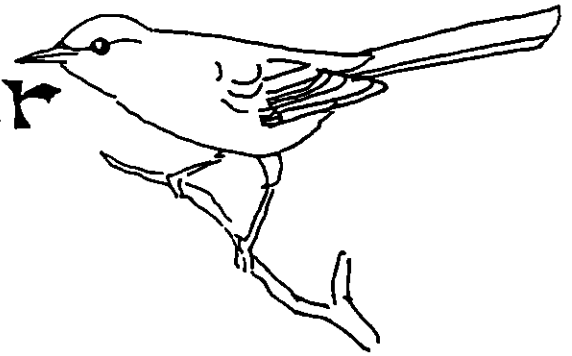


The Gnatcatcher



Newsletter of the Juniata Valley Audubon Society

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

Vol. 29, No. 3 — April 1997

Teaming With Wildlife Initiative Could Benefit Rural Economies

Rural economies could be some of the key beneficiaries of proposed federal legislation to create a stable funding source for wildlife conservation and the development of wildlife recreation and education projects. The Fish and Wildlife Diversity Funding Initiative, also known as "Teaming With Wildlife," would provide Pennsylvania's natural resource agencies with as much as \$13.5 million annually to conserve fish, wildlife, and their habitats and to create wildlife-associated recreational and educational opportunities. Teaming With Wildlife funds also would be made available to local conservation and recreation organizations under a competitive-grants program.

Teaming With Wildlife would place a user fee on wildlife products and outdoor equipment used by bird-watchers, hikers, nature photographers, and other wildlife enthusiasts. Patterned after excise taxes on hunting and fishing equipment that support the management of game animals, Teaming With Wildlife provides a way for other wildlife enthusiasts to support the conservation of Pennsylvania's fish, wildlife, and native plants. Items subject to the user fee would include backpacks, sleeping bags, tents, binoculars, photographic equipment, bird seed, bird feeders, field guides, and other outdoor recreation equipment.

The user fee would vary from ¼ % to 5 % of the manufacturers' cost to produce an item, depending upon how directly the item is used in outdoor recreation. The price increase on affected items would be

Continued on page 4 ⇨

April Program

ANNUAL SPRING BANQUET — Dr. Joseph F. Merritt, director of the Powdermill Nature Reserve and author of *Guide to the Mammals of Pennsylvania*, will present a slide show/talk on the mammals of Pennsylvania — past, present, and future. (If you contact Marge Hoyer at 684-7376 for reservations by Monday, Apr. 14, then you won't miss out on what promises to be an outstanding JVAS banquet!)
6 p.m., Monday, Apr. 21 at the Coachlite Restaurant, Old Rte 220, Vale (just north of Tyrone).

Field Trips

DUNNING CREEK WETLANDS. Join us in exploring the 180-acre wetland restoration site in Bedford Co., followed by dinner at the Jean Bonnet Tavern, near Bedford. (Phone trip leader Stan Kotala at 946-8840 for carpooling info.)

1 p.m., Sunday, Apr. 20

DUNLO BOG, in Cambria Co. Trip leader Paula Ford will teach you to become a bog lover! Boots are a must. (Phone Paula at 695-4799 for carpooling info.)

6:30 a.m., Sunday, Apr. 27

MOORE'S HILL TRAIL, at Canoe Creek State Park. Come see many wildflowers and spectacular forests of redbuds in bloom. Meet at the Visitor Center. Trip leader: Stan Kotala (946-8840).

1 p.m., Sunday, May 4

1997 NORTH AMERICAN MIGRATION COUNT.
All day Saturday, May 10. (See page 5 for info.)

Next Board Meeting

7 p.m., Monday, June 2 at the Kotalas' residence.
All members are welcome. Phone 946-8840 for directions.

The Gnatcatcher

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Juniata Valley Audubon Society
Charlie Hoyer, Editor
P.O. Box 32
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Articles may be submitted directly to the editor. The deadline for the May 1997 issue is Friday, May 2.

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 Marcia Bonta at 684-3113.

Officers

President	Stan Kotala	946-8840
Vice President	Bill King	942-7673
Secretary	Eugene Zielinski	353-8212
Treasurer	Marge Hoyer	684-7376

Committees

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Conservation	Paula Ford	695-4799
Field Trips	Janet Huber	942-5752
Newsletter	Charlie Hoyer	684-7376
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Hospitality	Barb Corle	276-3428
Historian	Barb Baird	946-0256
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International Issues	Bruce Bonta	684-3113
Christmas Bird Count	Bill King	942-7673
Director	Marcia Bonta	684-3113
Director	Anne Borland	695-9718
Director	Francis Burgoon	695-5857
Director	Dave Kyler	643-6030

President's Message

While I know most of you look forward to spring so that you can enjoy more outdoor activities, there are a couple of issues that require the attention of our pens and tablets.

The Gnatcatcher has followed the water quality regulations issue in Pennsylvania for some time. JVAS members responded well when the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) solicited comments last fall on its proposal for regulations for Pennsylvania. Now the state has come up with its answer, and according to the conservation groups and resource agencies that follow this issue closely, the proposal by the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) falls well short of the mark. A public comment period opened up on March 22 and closes on May 21. We need to show the DEP that people pay attention to their actions, and that it needs to do a better job protecting our water quality. Contact me for more information, including a sample letter.

The other issue involves our rare species. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has proposed listing the bog turtle (*Clemmys muhlenbergii*) as "threatened" under the federal Endangered Species Act. This little turtle is found in scattered locations in eastern Pennsylvania and other eastern states, but is threatened by collection (they fetch as much as \$2000 for a breeding pair) and by that old nemesis, habitat destruction. The existing state protection is not sufficient to protect them. The Service is required by law to use the "best scientific and commercial information" available, but it helps to write general letters showing our support for the Service's finding. The public comment period closes on April 29. You can contact me for more information and a sample letter to the Service.

I've learned that PennDOT has requested that a public hearing be held on the bog turtle listing and that the Service has scheduled it for Apr. 21 in Berks Co. What "scientific" information PennDOT might have on a turtle's occurrence is beyond me (maybe they have kept count of how many they have paved over), so PennDOT's real motivation in asking for the hearing might be just to grab some headlines. We all know that our representative in Congress, Bud Shuster, is a big proponent of new highways (needed or not, safe or not), and is a big detractor of environmental values. While I know that a trip to Berks Co. on an April evening is out of the question for most of us, written comments will be considered the same as oral testimony. If support for the turtle's listing comes from Shuster's own district, maybe he and PennDOT will begin to get the message that our resources must be protected when highways are built.

This spring season, let's take a few minutes to help protect our resources so they will be here in future springs for us and our children to enjoy!

Stan Kotala

CONSERVATION
CORNER
By Paula Ford

Audubon Celebrates American Wetlands Month!

May has been designated American Wetlands Month by the Environmental Protection Agency. To celebrate this time, take the opportunity to educate your U.S. representative or senators about the values of wetlands in your community, the public's interest in protecting and restoring wetlands, and the need for a strong Clean Water Act to protect this valuable resource. Congressional leaders listen to their constituents.

The Urgency

In the 104th Congress, vital legal protections for our nation's wetlands were threatened by the infamous "dirty water bill," introduced by Rep. Bud Shuster and passed by the House of Representatives, which would have reduced protections for 70% of our nation's wetlands. (The "dirty water bill" died in the Senate.)

The new 105th Congress will likely be taking up Clean Water Act reauthorization again, and Audubon must ensure that Congress now focuses on improving — not weakening — this keystone environmental law. Rep. Shuster, as chair of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, will play a major role in the Clean Water Act reauthorization. He needs to hear from us.

Congressional members are currently under pressure from developers and agricultural interests to weaken the Clean Water Act. Many are under the impression that wetlands protection is burdensome to landowners and is not an issue of concern to the public. The other side of the story needs to be told, and it is best told locally!

What You Can Do

Write letters to Rep. Shuster, Sen. Specter, and Sen. Santorum. Tell them you care about wetlands

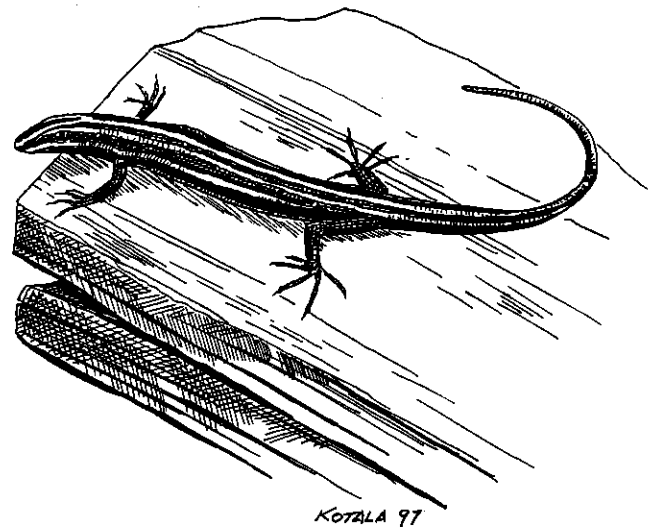
and clean water and that you want a strong Clean Water Act. In your own words, point out the values of wetlands as habitat for wildlife, as areas that soak up excess water in times of floods, and as natural filters that purify water.

Audubon's Wetlands Campaign staff has prepared a packet of materials for American Wetlands Month. To receive the packet, or if you have any questions about American Wetlands Month, please contact Mac Blewer of Audubon's Wetlands Campaign staff at:

National Audubon Society
1901 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20006

(202) 861-2242 X3034 / mblewer@audubon.org.

Let's make this spring a time to remember for wetlands conservation. Celebrate American Wetlands Month! ❖



KOTALA 97

FIVE-LINED SKINK

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!

... **Teaming With Wildlife** *Cont'd from first page*

minimal. For example, the surcharge on a \$125 tent that costs \$65 to manufacture would be \$3.25, and a field guide or a bag of bird seed that retails for \$10 would cost an additional 25 cents. The average Pennsylvanian who participates in wildlife recreation would spend \$5 to \$10 per year under these guidelines.

Under this program, Pennsylvania's most vulnerable habitats could be protected through outright purchase, conservation easements, and/or cooperative agreements with landowners. Wildlife managers would have the funds necessary to monitor populations, thereby detecting and halting population declines before species become endangered. Funding would be available for the construction of wildlife viewing sites, outdoor learning centers, and hiking and boating trails. Wildlife education specialists could be trained to work with children and adults, and technical assistance could be provided to landowners wishing to manage their lands for wildlife.

Teaming With Wildlife holds special promise for rural communities. In Pennsylvania, "nonconsumptive" wildlife recreation ("ecotourism," with associated viewing, feeding, and photographing wildlife already produces nearly \$1.8 billion in economic activity each year. This economic activity supports nearly 24,000 full- and part-time jobs, and generates \$38.1 million in state sales and income taxes. Projects developed under Teaming With Wildlife could help improve these figures. With funds available to develop wildlife viewing areas, hiking and boating trails, and educational facilities, rural communities could expand recreational opportunities for residents and visitors alike. In turn, campgrounds, outdoor equipment shops, restaurants, bed-and-breakfasts, service stations, and local retailers all could profit from increased visitation.

To date, more than 1500 organizations and businesses have recognized the benefits of this program. Conservation organizations supporting Teaming With Wildlife include the National Audubon Society, the National Wildlife Federation, Trout Unlimited, the

National Wild Turkey Federation, and the Sierra Club, among others. Business supporters include American AGCO (Nature Seasons bird seed), Bass Pro Shops, Swift Instruments, Falcon Press, the Archery Manufacturers and Merchants Association, the Shooting Sports Foundation, and more than 250 others.

In Pennsylvania, the initiative is supported by 132 organizations and business representing more than 325,000 people. Supporters include the Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs, the Rail-to-Trails Conservancy, the Association of Conservation Districts, the Audubon Council of Pennsylvania, the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, Purina Mills, Penn Fishing Tackle Manufacturing, Laurel Highlands Schwinn, Newtown Bicycle and Fitness, and several sporting goods retailers.

Teaming With Wildlife likely will be brought before Congress this year — perhaps as early as this month. If the legislation is introduced and fails, it could be another 10 years or more before it is brought up again. If Teaming With Wildlife is to become a reality, it needs the support of all wildlife enthusiasts in writing to manufacturers of outdoor equipment and to congressional representatives. ❖

— Lisa Williams

*Nongame Program Specialist
Pa. Fish & Boat Commission*

Award Winner

The Origin and Evolution of Birds (by Alan Feduccia, Yale Univ. Press, 1996) has won the 1996 Award of the Association of American Publishers, Professional and Scholarly Publishing Division. ❖

**REFRESHMENTS AT ALL JVAS PROGRAM
MEETINGS AND BOARD MEETINGS
ARE DONATED BY**

**NATURE'S PANTRY
1054 PENNSYLVANIA AVE.
TYRONE
684-0393**

The "Teaming With Wildlife" legislation that's been written about in *The Gnatcatcher* over the past year will likely be introduced in Congress within the next two months.

It's critical that *you* write a letter of support for "Teaming With Wildlife" to your senators and representatives.

In your letter, please make the following points:

- 1) State your support for "Teaming With Wildlife."
- 2) Express your approval of a user pays-user benefits system of funding nongame wildlife projects.
- 3) Inform your senators and representatives that "Teaming With Wildlife" is patterned after the highly successful Pittman-Robertson and Dingell-Johnson Acts, whereby hunters and fishermen have paid a surcharge on their equipment for the past 50 years for the benefit of game species.
- 4) Remind your senators and representatives that Pennsylvania will obtain **\$14 million per year** for nongame wildlife projects if "Teaming With Wildlife" becomes law. At present less than \$600,000 are spent annually for nongame conservation projects in the Commonwealth.

Address your letters to:

Senator Arlen Specter
530 Hart Senate Office Bldg.
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Rick Santorum
521 Dirksen Senate Office Bldg.
Washington, DC 20510

Representative Bud Shuster
2188 Rayburn House Office Bldg.
Washington, DC 20515

"Teaming With Wildlife" represents an outstanding opportunity to establish reliable funding for nongame conservation projects.

Write your letters of support *today!*

— Stan Kotala

'97 North American Migration Count

The Sixth Annual North American Migration Count will be held Saturday, May 10. Many JVAS members had participated in the count last year. I'm hoping for the same or better level of participation this year. The count is similar to the Christmas Bird Count (CBC), but is conducted throughout the county instead of the CBC circle.

This is an opportunity for birders of all kinds and all levels of expertise to help. We'll count all species and numbers of individuals. This can be done at feeders, leisure drives in the country, or intense, dawn-to-dusk hard-core birding. There are no fees.

The North American Migration Count is a project that aids in the protection of migratory and other birds. By setting aside one day all over North America to survey populations, information can be gathered to determine man's affect on other species. Last year 717 birders in 39 Pennsylvania counties participated and reported 219 species and 208,453 individual birds.

If you'd like to take part in this very important project, contact Huntingdon County coordinator Dave Kyler at 643-6030 or Blair County coordinator Bill King at 942-7673. ❖

— Bill King

DCNR Foresters Participate in Sting To Catch Dumpers

Several individuals who thought the forests were their own private dumpsters, recently were caught on videotape through undercover surveillance operations coordinated by law enforcement officials in Centre County and state resource agencies, including the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR).

Twelve people from the DCNR's Bureau of Forestry, the Game Commission, and the Fish and Boat Commission targeted two popular illegal dumping areas — one on private property and one in Moshannon State Forest. The tapes revealed several people illegally dumping car parts, disposable dia-

pers, and other items. Six people were cited and fined from \$200 to \$2000 as the result of the videotaped evidence.

Dumping trash and waste materials is not uncommon in the state forests because of the large land mass, remote areas, and infrequent patrols. People use "popular" illegal dumping areas to get rid of appliances, furniture, and other large items in order to avoid paying hauling costs. DCNR's Bureau of Forestry is now reviewing and employing new techniques such as videotaping to curtail the illegal dumping. ❖

— From The Resource, March 7, 1997
Newsletter of the DCNR

Dear JVAS Members,

From myself, Commissioners, and Regional Office Staff, I wish to extend a personal invitation to you to attend our "Backyard Habitat" seminar Saturday, April 19 at the Pennsylvania Game Commission Southcentral Regional Office in Huntingdon.

We have developed a program that combines the public's interest in both wildlife and gardening. While many people wish to do something for wildlife, they may feel that their limited property couldn't help much. We wish to show that this may not necessarily be the case — wildlife can benefit despite property size, even if it is nothing more than a potted flowering plant used to attract hummingbirds on an apartment deck!

Our day's speakers will include both Commission Land Managers and others knowledgeable in developing habitat for wildlife.

Because seating is extremely limited, I would urge you to make your reservation as soon as possible. You may do this by calling our Regional Office at 643-1831. Also, we plan to offer a meal with your choice of meat balls, rib sandwiches, or ham and cheese sandwiches with a drink for \$6. When making your reservation, please tell our dispatcher if you also care to reserve a lunch.

We look forward to seeing you on the 19th! If you have any questions, please call Information and Education Supervisor Don Garner at the above number.

Willis A. Sneath, Director
PGC Southcentral Region

THE FLOOD

rose-
breasted grosbeak declaiming
the terms of his deed
to this scenic streamfront property
won't yield an inch even to the shadow
of death itself:

the phantom jet
tears a hold in the treetop air
big enough for an ordnance
of subsonic supercharged
terror to drop through.

a heartbeat later
the ringing in my ears conforms to grosbeak song,
a stream of notes drowning
the friendliest fire,
admitting no impediment to its springtime flood.

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Bird Words

Don't know a sapsucker from a scapular? Fear not — the *Birder's Dictionary* (Falcon Press, 1996, \$8.95) defines both, as well as an additional 1576 common and not-so-common terms about birds. While it's particularly useful for birders, it also makes for interesting browsing for bird lovers of all casts.

The colloquial species names are particularly intriguing. You won't find names such as hairyhead (hooded merganser), little dukelet (screech owl), and bogsucker (American woodcock) in standard field guides. Terms for groups of birds are equally interesting; most people have heard of a gaggle of geese — but how about an ostentation of peacocks or an unkindness of ravens?

The *Birder's Dictionary* also discusses bird behavior and includes line drawings of avian anatomy. ❖

— Tom Heine

The Many Moods of March

Sometimes it was difficult to find signs of spring in the frequent bitter winds, snow, freezing rains, cold, and overcast skies of March. Nevertheless, capricious, tantalizing March did have its moments.

The early March snowstorm brought two crows to the yard below our bird feeders — a mere four feet from the kitchen door.

In the 25 years we have been feeding birds here, we have never had crows. They scratched the wet snow aside and scarfed up seeds as they waddled about. One crow, nervous and alert, flew off and back several times and frequently called warnings to its bolder companion. Those warnings were ignored by the single-minded crow interested only in eating. Finally, after we had ample time to examine the blackness of crows and their large, heavy bills they both flew away and did not return.

On March 9 — a rare, beautiful day — a large black bird sat on the lowest limb of a locust tree in the middle of the Far Field stretching its wings. It was our first turkey vulture of the season. Instead of tilting in the heavy winds, it had zeroed in on the remains of a skunk — dead for over two months, but previously covered by ice and snow.

Two days later, I walked Greenbrier Trail in mixed snow and rain and was amazed to find two blooming coltsfoot, drooping from the inclement weather but still alive. Seeing those cheerful, yellow disks on such a dull day seemed an omen of better times to come.

The birds, too, refused to give into the weather.

Robins, chickadees, mourning doves, white-throated sparrows, titmice, bluebirds, cardinals, nuthatches, and song sparrows defied the cold and sang and called even at 17 degrees. Once I sat on my log seat along the Far Field Road and simultaneously listened to trees crackling with ice as they swayed in the wind and the calling of robins.

Then came the first full day of spring, mostly overcast at dawn and 32 degrees. But Bruce heard the first phoebe call. It was not one of our returning

birds but a “touch-and-go” phoebe that was gone before I could see or hear it.

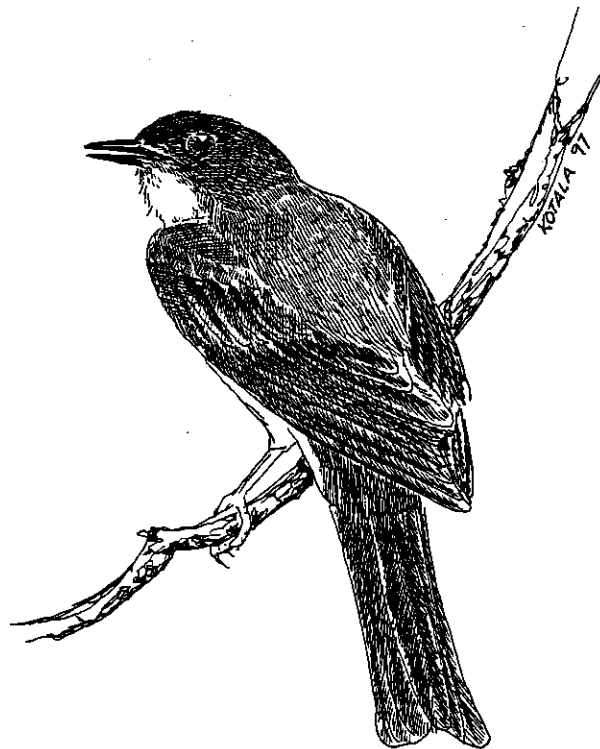
That day, though, gradually warmed up to 65 degrees. I sat on our veranda all afternoon, gathering in the warmth, watching six turkey vultures circling over First Field, and waiting in vain for sight or sound of a phoebe.

Instead, near dusk, Bruce reported that the wood frogs were calling. I rushed down to the pond, the almost-full moon already shining in the darkening sky. I could barely see the frogs as they swam back and forth, but I did hear them. A pair of great horned owls hooted back

and forth as I walked back home and later, I heard the calls of tundra swans as they headed north.

Surely spring was here to stay! But the next day the cold returned, the frogs sank back into the pond muck, and the house shutters banged and rattled in the ferocious winds, reminding me once again that March is a tease, first slyly offering up small doses of spring, then slamming back into winter over and over again. ❖

By Marcia Bonta



Protecting Species in Canada

More than 130 U.S. environmental organizations signed a letter to Vice President Gore encouraging him to pressure Canada to strengthen its proposed Endangered Species Protection Act. The groups who signed the letter are upset because the bill would impose fines and punishment to those who harm species or habitat only when it occurs on federal lands or if the species is listed under the Canadian Fisheries Act or Migratory Birds Convention Act. Additionally, the bill would only give the federal government discretionary authority to prohibit direct harm to species that occupy both sides of the U.S.-Canada border. The U.S. environmental

groups feel that American efforts to protect these species would be severely hampered unless this section of the Canadian bill is strengthened. ❖

Loud and Clear

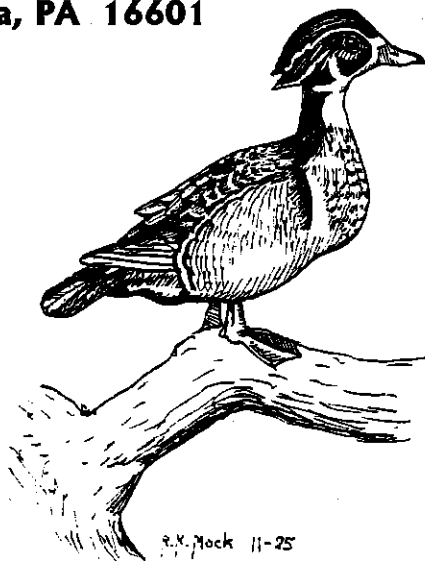
A legislative aide arrived late to an event in which his congressman was speaking. Hurrying backstage, he saw the politician leaving the podium to the sound of thunderous applause.

"What did you say to get such a round of applause, sir?" the aide asked.

The politician frowned. "I told them I would begin my speech as soon as they quieted down." ❖

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