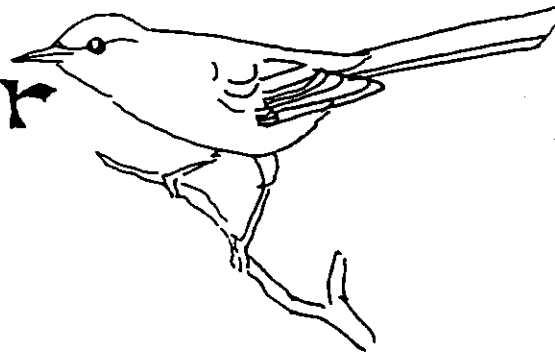


# The Gnatcatcher



Newsletter of the  
**Juniata Valley Audubon Society**

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

Vol. 29, No. 5 - June 1997

## **JVAS Receives \$14,800 Heinz Foundation Grant For Shaw Run Restoration Project**

The Juniata Valley Audubon Society has been awarded a grant for \$14,800 by the Heinz Foundation's Western Pennsylvania Watershed Protection Program for the implementation of its restoration plan for Shaw Run and Lloydville Run in Antis Township, Blair County.

Both streams are affected by acid mine discharges that have adversely impacted terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems in these watersheds.

The Heinz Foundation grant to the JVAS will result in the treatment of a highly visible discharge along S.R. 865 and the revegetation of bare areas. Final designs for the project are being carried out by the Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Southern Alleghenies Conservancy.

The discharge will be treated through a series of ponds, wetlands, and limestone channels that will be constructed by the NRCS and the Blair County Conservation District this summer. The systems are to be completed by Thanksgiving of this year.

The project will result in the restoration of the aquatic ecosystems of 8 miles of stream and the revegetation of 100 acres of barren land.

Stay tuned for announcements of a field trip to this site sometime in the fall! ❖ — Stan Kotala

### **Bluebird Monitoring**

Since I've been actively involved with the JVAS I've had the opportunity to do many fun and exciting things. One of the most rewarding things I've done is monitor bluebirds at Canoe Creek State Park. Through the spring and summer I monitor 14 nesting boxes. I check each box every week to 10 days and record what I find at each box. It's a great thrill to see a nest being built, eggs being laid, and hatchlings hatching. I've learned a lot about bluebirds and other species while helping out. I spend about 30 minutes a visit and have been well rewarded.

The staff at Canoe Creek State Park is still looking for volunteers. If this sounds like something you would enjoy, call the park at 695-6807. ❖

— Debbie Haine

### **June Program**

*"PROTECTION FOR PINE CREEK." Phil Stillerman, President of the Pine Creek Headwaters Protection Group, will inform us of new threats facing "Pennsylvania's Grand Canyon."*

*7:30 P.M., Monday, June 16 at the Visitor Center, Canoe Creek State Park, off Rte 22 east of Hollidaysburg.*

### **Field Trip**

*FERNS OF THE LITTLE JUNIATA VALLEY. Meet at White Oak Hall in Fort Roberdeau County Park. We'll investigate ferns at Fort Roberdeau County Park, Tytoona Cave, and along the Little Juniata River at Schoenberger and Spruce Creek. From there we'll have dinner at the Main Street Cafe, in Alexandria. Trip leaders are Dr. John Lennox (946-1584) and Stan Kotala (946-8840).*

*1 P.M., Sunday, June 22 [Rescheduled from June 15]*

### **Next Board Meeting**

*7 P.M., Monday, September 8 at the Kotalas' residence. All members are welcome. Phone 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  
P.O. Box 32  
Tyrone, PA 16686-0032

Articles may be submitted directly to the editor. The deadline for the September 1997 issue is Friday, August 30.

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.

### Officers

President . . . . . Stan Kotala 946-8840  
Vice President . . . . . Terry Wentz 692-4224  
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Field Trips . . . . . Janet Huber 942-5752  
Publications & Publicity Charlie Hoyer 684-7376  
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### Directors

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Director of Ornithology . . . Bill King 942-7673  
Director . . . . . Dave Kyler 643-6030

## President's Message

The most serious setback to the preservation of additional natural lands in Pennsylvania this year has been the failure of the state legislature to grant a hunting license fee increase to the Pennsylvania Game Commission.

Until last year the PGC was the most active buyer of natural lands in the Commonwealth. Its yearly land purchases dwarfed those of private conservancies such as the Nature Conservancy and the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy.

Unfortunately, since no license fee increase has been granted since 1985, the Game Commission has been forced to stop purchasing land for preservation in the State Game Lands system. It has acquired no new land over the past year. It used to buy thousands of acres annually!

A recent proposal, however, offers conservationists some hope. It has been suggested that a Wildlands Conservation Stamp be created and sold not only with hunting licenses, but also to nonhunters who wish to see natural lands preserved. The stamp would be issued yearly and cost \$5. Funds generated by its sale would be used solely for the purchase of acreage for State Game Lands.

The Wildlands Conservation Stamp will put the PGC's land preservation program back on track. Please write to your state senator and representative and tell them that the \$5 Wildlands Conservation Stamp should be adopted — its purchase being mandatory for hunters, but also made available to nonhunters who want to see natural lands preserved.

*Stan Kotala*

Look for your next *Gnatcatcher* in September.

Have a great summer!

REFRESHMENTS AT ALL JVAS PROGRAM MEETINGS  
AND BOARD MEETINGS  
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1054 PENNSYLVANIA AVE.  
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684-0393

## CONSERVATION

### CORNER

By Paula Ford

## Ten Things You Can Do This Summer to Help Protect Our Environment

- ❶ Stay informed. Call the Audubon Action Line (800-659-2622) for a recorded message — available 24 hours a day. The Action Line provides weekly updates on key national environmental issues. Use the information to write to or call your member of congress. Watch out for sneak attacks.
- ❷ Listen to "Life on Earth" on National Public Radio on Sunday mornings at 10 o'clock. The program provides good overviews of many environmental topics. WPSU carries the show (106.7 FM in the Altoona area or 91.5 FM if you live closer to State College). If you can't listen to the program at that time, tape it off your VCR — check with your local cable company to find out what channel carries National Public Radio.
- ❸ Let people know you are a birder. When you travel tell the motel operator, waiters, etc. that you are visiting their area to watch birds and other wildlife. Who knows? They may begin to think that wildlife and habitats are worth protecting!
- ❹ Plant some native plants in your yard for birds and butterflies. The Audubon Council of Pennsylvania has published a booklet that will get you started. Send \$10 to ACP, Suite 300, 1104 Fernwood Ave., Camp Hill, PA 17011.
- ❺ If you are spending a small fortune on lawn chemicals, STOP! Why are you polluting your environment with poisons? Take that \$400-500 you are giving to lawn chemical companies and spend a portion on native plants that will attract hummingbirds and butterflies (see ❹). Make a donation to an environmental organization such as Audubon with the remainder of the money.
- ❻ Learn to appreciate a new place, or learn to

appreciate a familiar place in a new way. As Doug Gross, coordinator of the Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology's Special Areas Project says, "If you bird a place on a regular basis, you will see rarities." Why travel many miles for a chance sighting? Spend some time in a local park and get to know it well.

- ❼ Introduce a child to nature. Take advantage of special programs at many of the area's state parks. Recycle old nature books by giving them to a neighbor kid.
- ❽ Learn something new. Join the Pennsylvania amphibian and reptile atlas project; contact Stan Kotala (946-8840) for details. Or read a few books about a new topic. (I'm trying to learn more about ferns this summer.)
- ❾ Volunteer. Help with maintenance at a park. Give a talk. If you would like to share your love of nature with others, join the JVAS speakers' bureau and give talks or lead field trips for local schools, parks, or clubs. Call Alice Kotala (946-8840) to join the speakers' bureau.
- ❿ Relax. Enjoy. Have fun.

### Nominations Anyone?

President Stan Kotala has asked me to serve as the chair of the nominating committee for the JVAS election to be held in the spring of 1998. It's not too early to begin thinking about who we can nominate to serve as our next president. Please call me with your suggestions (695-4799).

Of course, Stan has been an outstanding president, but don't let that discourage those who might want to serve. We all recognize that not everyone is a Stan. Our next president will have his or her own style of leading the chapter, and that is fine. In fact, it's one of the characteristics of a healthy chapter — that it evolves as the leadership changes.

So start thinking about how you might serve your chapter. If everyone waits for someone else to step forward, we will have a big problem next spring. When I approach you at a meeting or call you to discuss this, please say, "Yes. I'd be glad to serve."

— Paula Ford  
Chair, nominating committee

## Education News

By Alice Kotala

### JVAS SPONSORS NATURE DISCOVERY CAMP

The Juniata Valley Audubon Society is planning a two-week Nature Discovery Camp to be held in July. The event is part of Penn-Mont Academy's Summer Fun program for their students. Topics include "Wetlands and Streams," "Birds of Blair County," and "Wildflowers," with programs and hands-on activities administered by JVAS speakers bureau members Stan Kotala, Jean Sinal, and Paula Ford. Participants will construct a bluebird trail on the school property with bluebird box kits donated by the Pennsylvania Game Commission. The Game Commission also will be providing a special wildlife demonstration. Both weeks will culminate in field trips to Canoe Creek State Park led by park naturalist Kerry Estright-Prusnak.

Penn-Mont Academy's elementary students subscribe to Audubon Adventures, the National Audubon Society's environmental education program for 9-12 year olds. The children recently have begun working on their Wild Action project, a butterfly/hummingbird garden to enhance the school grounds. Funding for this endeavor is predominantly to be provided by a Wild Action grant through Project Wild of the Pa. Game Commission. The JVAS assisted with the grant application process and is now guiding the implementation of the project.

### STREAM CLASS LAUNCHED

Last month the JVAS and Blair County Trout Unlimited launched a new educational program entitled "Stream Class." Taught by JVAS President Stan Kotala and BCTU Director Jim Rhodes, Stream Class teaches students to view streams as reflections of their watersheds.

The class objectives are to teach students:

- ① To evaluate stream water quality using benthic macroinvertebrates as indicator species.

- ② To view benthic macroinvertebrates as integrators of the watershed processes.
- ③ To appreciate the importance of riparian forests to overall stream health.
- ④ To recognize activities in their watershed that may be detrimental to stream health.

Stream Class was presented to 110 students of the Frankstown Elementary School on May 12 by Jim Rhodes and Stan Kotala and to 75 Girl Scouts of the Talus Rock Council at Camp Conshatawba on May 17 by Stan Kotala. Both presentations were well received by students, teachers, scouts, and troop leaders.

Children are attracted to streams naturally. They love to explore and wade in them, so teaching the Stream Class program is easy and fun!

If you know of any schools or youth organizations that would like to have Stream Class presented to their group, please call JVAS Education Chair Alice Kotala at 946-8840.

### MAY JVAS SPEAKERS BUREAU ACTIVITY

- |        |   |
|--------|---|
| May 1  | Jody Wallace — "Frogs and Toads"<br>Lincoln Elementary School, Tyrone<br>60 students  |
| May 12 | Stan Kotala — "Stream Class"<br>Frankstown Elem. School, 110 students   |
| May 17 | Paula Ford and Alice Kotala —<br>"Wildflowers"<br>Girl Scouts — Talus Rock Council<br>Camp Conshatawba, 75 scouts                                       |
| May 17 | Stan Kotala — "Stream Class"<br>Girl Scouts — Talus Rock Council<br>Camp Conshatawba, 75 scouts   |
| May 22 | Stan Kotala — "Birds of Ridge and Valley"<br>Bellwood-Antis Middle School<br>Camp Blue Diamond, 105 students  |
| May 31 | Stan Kotala — "Bird Identification by<br>Sight and Sound"<br>Bird identification merit badge program<br>Boy Scouts<br>Canoe Creek State Park, 80 scouts |

### Southcentral Regional Coordinator Needed For Bat Concentration Survey

The National Audubon Society, the Pennsylvania Game Commission, and the Wild Resource Conservation Fund have collaborated on the Pennsylvania Bat Concentration Survey for the past several years. Its purpose is to determine the location of bat maternity colonies in Pennsylvania.

The southcentral portion of our state has ten bat concentration sites that have been surveyed over the past several years, four of which are in Blair County — the largest, of course, being the Turkey Valley Church at Canoe Creek State Park.

A Southcentral Regional Commissioner (RC) is needed as soon as possible. The RC's duties would include recording results of other participants' surveys and forwarding this data to the Pennsylvania Game Commission, serving as a contact person between the owners of survey sites and the Game Commission, and recruiting new participants.

Anyone interested in serving as the Southcentral Regional Coordinator for the Pennsylvania Bat Concentration Survey should drop a note to James Hart, The Vertebrate Museum, Shippensburg University, Shippensburg, PA 17257. K

### Horseshoe Crab Conservation Alert!

The State College Bird Club has sent out an urgent alert via e-mail concerning the overharvesting of horseshoe crabs (overharvesting to fill the serious shortage of America's favorite, the blue crab — caused by pollution of the Chesapeake Bay).

Eighty percent of the North American seabird species live on a horseshoe crab diet while migrating north along the New Jersey shoreline. New Jersey Governor Christine Whitman has placed a 60-day moratorium on the harvesting of horseshoe crabs; however, crab suppliers are pressuring to have the moratorium lifted.

Please call the New Jersey governor's office at (609) 292-6000 and pledge your support to have the moratorium continue. — Jack Cupper



### Penn-Mont Academy Butterfly/Hummingbird Garden Takes Flight

Last month the JVAS was awarded a \$500 grant from the Pennsylvania Game Commission for our plans to construct a butterfly and hummingbird garden at the Penn-Mont Academy Elementary School, in Duncansville.

Penn-Mont students and teachers have already begun work on the garden, which will feature ten species of native perennials that attract butterflies and hummingbirds. These plants are cardinal flower (*Lobelia cardinalis*), bee balm (*Monarda didyma*), blazing star (*Liatris spicata*), Coreopsis (*Coreopsis verticillata*), New England aster (*Aster novae-angliae*), New York aster (*Aster novae-belgii*), phlox (*Phlox paniculata*), purple coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*), butterfly weed (*Aselepias tuberosa*), and orange coneflower (*Rudbeckia fulgida*).

The completed low-maintenance garden will encompass 400 square feet of former lawn and, through plant division and seed collection, will serve as a source of plants for future expansion.

The JVAS Education Committee currently is creating a slide show detailing this project and how its principles may be applied to convert areas that have mowed lawns and exotic ornamentals into patches of native biodiversity attractive to wildlife.

All JVAS members are strongly encouraged to visit the Penn-Mont Academy Elementary School, 521 Municipal Drive, Duncansville, to see a fine example of gardening for wildlife!

— Alice Kotala

### Pennsylvania to Launch Senior Environmental Corps

Pennsylvania plans to establish the first statewide Senior Environmental Corps in the nation, officials representing the state departments of Environmental Protection and Aging and the Environmental Alliance for Senior Involvement (EASI) announced recently. "This partnership will allow the DEP to take advantage of the dedication and community spirit of a very valuable segment of our population: Pennsylvania's retirees and senior citizens," DEP Executive Deputy Secretary David E. Hess said. "We have the largest rural senior population in the nation and are second only to Florida in the proportion of citizens over 65."

"These are people with experience and judgment that our Commonwealth still needs. We welcome this opportunity not only to benefit from their volunteerism, but to match it up with the Ridge Administration's commitment to environmental education."

Hess and EASI officials signed a letter of intent to work together to encourage seniors to volunteer in environment areas and to act as mentors and trainers to youth throughout the Commonwealth.

"This agreement is just the beginning of a pro-

cess to involve seniors in volunteer work that will genuinely improve the environment," Hess said.

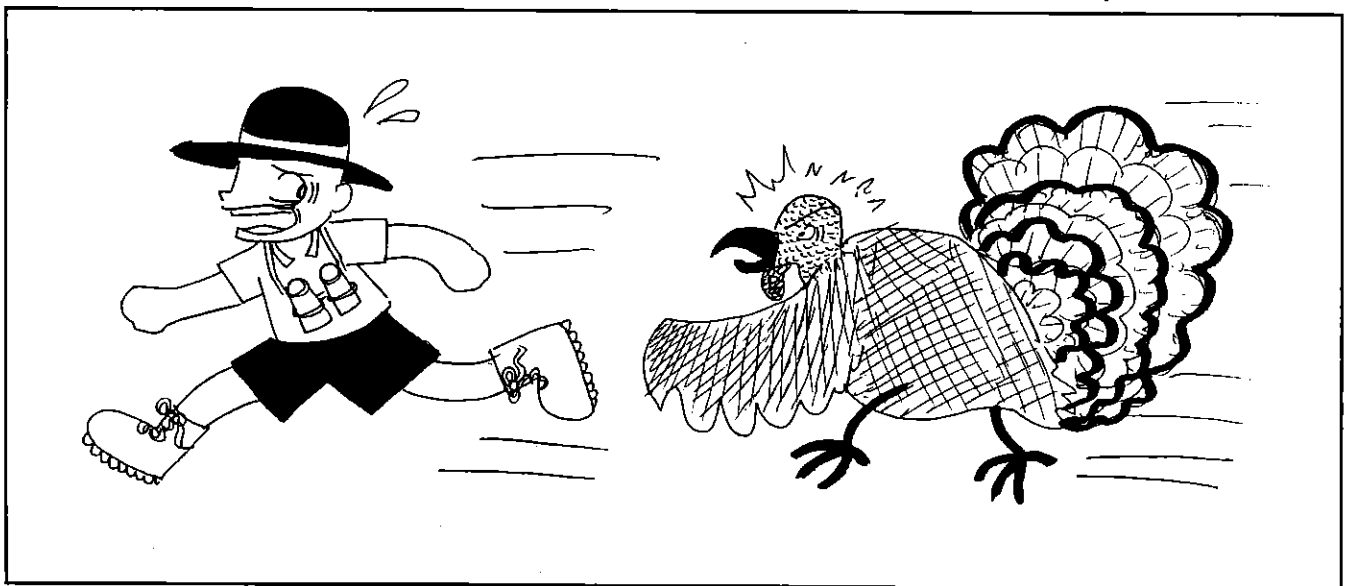
Tom Benjamin, EASI president, said, "Older Americans bring a lifetime of experience, and many of our volunteers bring technical expertise into innovative partnerships to meet local environmental needs."

Pennsylvania Department of Aging Secretary Richard Browdie also has expressed his agency's support for the project. "Pennsylvania has a reputation for being a leader in intergenerational initiatives, and we would expect this project to have a great deal of appeal for older volunteers residing in rural areas," Browdie said.

In cooperation with the DEP'S Bureau of Watershed Conservation, EASI will help establish a database on water monitoring and other environmental needs. The DEP and the EASI also hope to use seniors as web and Internet masters and hosts to provide even wider distribution of the collected data and analyses.

— From the May 16 issue of UPDATE  
Newsletter of the Department  
of Environmental Protection

— By Jessica Ford Cameron



"I guess you weren't bluffing!"

## What Good Are Dandelions?

Millions of dollars are spent by Americans every year in pursuit of the perfect lawn. Using a wide range of so-called "harmless" herbicides, they create a biological desert. This rage against nature's invasion is particularly strong toward the ubiquitous and persistent dandelions.

Foreign immigrants, like most Americans, common dandelions were brought here by Europeans who prized them as salad greens and potherbs. The Celts taught their Roman conquerors how to make a superior wine by fermenting dandelion flowers. This tradition is still honored in country households throughout Europe and America. And the French eat the flowers, dipped in batter and deep-fried.

The common dandelion was also valued as a medicinal herb, particularly as a diuretic, giving it one of its less charming alternate names — "pee-the-bed." Modern herbalists prescribe it for liver complaints — as a laxative and a diuretic. Nutritionists have discovered that the dandelion is high in calcium, potassium, vitamin A, thiamine, and riboflavin. Indeed, its greens are the perfect spring tonic.

The dandelion's long taproot also has its uses. During the Civil War, Southerners ground and roasted it as a coffee substitute, while Russians used it to produce latex during the Second World War. The late farmer and writer Louis Bromfield encouraged dandelions in his lawn because the taproots bring valuable elements up from depths that short-rooted grass can't reach. Subsequently, scientists who analyzed trace elements in dandelions found as many as 62 in one plant.

Researchers have also discovered that dandelion blossoms exude ethylene gas at sunset. Since ethylene hastens the ripening of fruit, some commercial orchards have resorted to mass plantings of dandelions.

All utilitarian arguments aside, what is the wildlife value of dandelions? In urban areas dandelions may be among the few flowers from which wild bees can gather nectar. And a number of native butterflies, such as the falcate orangetip, red admiral, and comma, sip nectar from the yellow flowers as well.

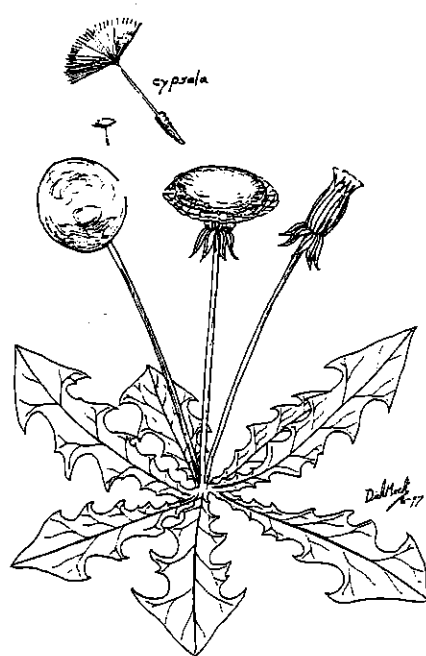
But it is the seed heads that provide the most nutritious food for birds. Over the years I have watched American goldfinches, indigo buntings, field sparrows, and chipping sparrows eat dandelion seeds.

On May 19, however, new visitors appeared. A pair of white-crowned sparrows vigorously yanked out seeds and ate them in what seemed like frantic haste. The dominant bird continually stole the other bird's seed heads — reminding me of a child convinced that another child's toys are better than his. But the subordinate bird merely moved peacefully on to other seed heads. After all, there were plenty of seeds for both of those beautiful birds with their bright

pink bills, soft gray breasts, and puffy crowns vividly striped with black and white.

They fed from early morning until late afternoon before disappearing. No doubt they were headed north to their nesting grounds in the semi-barrens of northern Quebec and Labrador, fueled with our dandelion seeds. A worthwhile use, indeed, of the hated dandelion! ❖

By Marcia Bonta



### "Partners in Wildlife" Discussed

At the JVAS May program meeting, Dave Putnam, of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, talked about the "Partners in Wildlife" program. This program is designed to help private landowners create or restore wildlife habitat on their properties, and Dave is in charge of the program for Pennsylvania. He talked about a number of ways the program has been implemented, including restoration (but not creation) of wetlands, fencing of streams to promote waterside vegetation, and use of native

warm-season grasses for hay and forage — in contrast with the European and Asian cool-season grasses commonly grown.

Dave discussed the obvious and not-so-obvious benefits of habitat restoration to wildlife. He also noted that most restoration is done on land that is barely suitable for other purposes, such as crop or livestock production, thus showing that Partners in Wildlife has economic benefits too. ❖

— Eugene Zielinski

**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!**

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