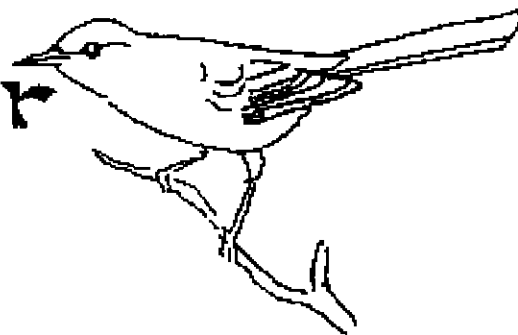


The Gnatcatcher



Newsletter of the
Juniata Valley Audubon Society

P.O. Box 71, Tyrone, Pennsylvania 16686

Vol. 30, No. 5 — October 1998

President Clinton Pushes Tighter Rules to Guard Wetlands

By Traci Watson, USA TODAY

In a decided victory for environmentalists, President Clinton this month proposed stiffer federal rules for protecting wetlands. Clinton's announcement marked the abandonment of wetlands rules that had been proposed only three months ago by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which regulates wetlands. Those proposals had prompted strong criticism from both environmentalists and builders.

The new rules provide stricter protections for vulnerable wetlands, such as those inside floodplains. The rules also eliminate a proposal to allow builders to destroy up to 10 acres of wetland with little government oversight.

"By thinking twice, we can prevent tragedy and save tax payer dollars while protecting the environment," Clinton said.

Environmentalists praised the new rules. "What the administration is proposing, in my view, is a pretty significant step forward," said Andrew Caputo, of the Natural Resources Defense Council. He cautioned, however, that he had not seen the plan's details.

"We're stunned," said Mike Luzier of the National Association of Home Builders. "The permit process already is cumbersome, tortuous, and slow."

The Clinton administration long has vowed to protect wetlands, which include marshes and estuaries. Wetlands absorb floodwaters and filter pollution out of rivers. More than half of the U.S. wetlands have been destroyed, and 100,000 acres more vanish per year.

In July, the Corp proposed a new system of permits for destroying wetlands. The proposal was decried widely, and environmentalists flooded the Corps with negative comments.

The rules announced make it more difficult to

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October Program

"SAVING THE 1000 STEPS." JVAS member Steve Stroman will present a slide show/talk on *The Thousand Steps*, located on U.S. Rt. 22 eight miles east of Huntingdon in Jacks Narrows. The thousand stone steps lead up to the site of a quarry that ceased operations in 1952. Steve will explain why the 671-acre tract, which contains several threatened species, should be preserved for its historic and recreational value. (Steve will lead a field trip to *The Thousand Steps* on the following Saturday, Oct. 24.)

7 P.M., Monday, Oct. 19 at the Visitor Center, Canoe Creek State Park, off Rt. 22 east of Hollidaysburg.

Field Trips

THE THOUSAND STEPS. Hike up *The Thousand Steps*. See the remains of the dinkey railroad repair shop and great views of the Juniata River, Mapleton, and Mount Union.

Meet outside McDonald's Restaurant in the "miracle mile" on Rt. 22, Huntingdon at 9:45 A.M. Bring binoculars, water, lunch, and sturdy shoes.

Trip leader: Steve Stroman, 643-1444

10 A.M. to 2 P.M., Saturday, Oct. 24

STONE MOUNTAIN HAWKWATCH PLATFORM. Observe as many as eight different species of migrating raptors including golden eagles.

Meet outside McDonald's on Rt. 22, Huntingdon at 9 A.M. Bring binoculars, lunch, and sturdy shoes. Dress warmly.

Trip leader: Dave Kyler, 643-6030

10 A.M. to 4 P.M., Saturday, Nov. 7

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Charlie Hoyer, Editor
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Articles may be submitted directly to the editor. The deadline for the November 1998 issue is Friday, October 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, September, October, and November at 7:30 p.m. (A business meeting is at 7 o'clock.) 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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President's Message

The debate occurs each fall, and the winner soon will be apparent as Mother Nature paints the landscape. Always there are the questions when and how brilliant the fall colors will be.

Spectacular colors result from trees shutting down their food-producing chlorophyll in preparation for winter. The chlorophyll green gives way to underlying pigments of reds, yellows, oranges, and browns that have been masked all summer long in these same leaves.

The brilliance and timing of the colorful displays depend on rainfall, temperatures, and the length of daylight. Trees need bright, sunny days with temperatures in the 60s and nights cool, but not frosty. Freezing temperatures, dry conditions, and wind can cause the leaves to fall premature to their maximum hues of color.

I can recall a time in the late 1970s when I was seated in Beaver Stadium with a cloud-free sky of azure blue. The surrounding mountains seemed to be painted on the horizon in brilliant shades of orange and yellows. The next day brought steady rain with light wind, and the leaves fell, melting the colors onto the ground. How quickly things can change!

Come along on our field trip Saturday, October 24 and hike up The Thousand Steps, near Mount Union, to great views of the surrounding mountains and valleys. Who knows? It may be a once-in-a-lifetime display of autumn's glory!

Jerry Wentz

Send Your BiLo/Riverside Receipts to Anne

Please continue to mail your cash register tapes from BiLo Foods and Riverside Markets to JVAS Director Anne Borland, at 138A Larch St., Hollidaysburg, PA 16648. She redeems the receipts for CA\$H for the JVAS. Thanks, and keep 'em comin'!

. . . Tighter rules *Cont'd from first page*

destroy wetlands. Under this proposal, many builders will have to go through a rigorous application process before filling a wetland. Projects to require extensive review include:

- Master-planned developments — housing tracts that include provisions for environmental protection.
- Developments built near “impaired” waters that could become even more polluted without their wetlands.
- Developments built near “pristine” waters that would lose their wild quality if their wetlands are filled.
- Developments built within a river’s 100-year floodplain — the area that is expected to flood only once every century.

The administration will take public comments on the new rules before finalizing them. ❖

Did you know?

Pennsylvania has more flowing water than any other state in the contiguous United States — 54,000 miles.

Pennsylvania Audubon Society Launched By Two Major Grants

When the National Audubon Society engaged in their two-year Strategic Planning Process, one key outcome was to recognize Audubon’s field structure and create state offices. Pennsylvania was the tenth state office to be announced and is known as the “Pennsylvania Audubon Society.” The David and Lucile Packard Foundation provided a \$4 million grant to the National Audubon Society to launch state offices, and a portion of the grant was made available to Pennsylvania as a matching grant.

To leverage its matching grant, the Pennsylvania Audubon Society submitted a proposal to the Rich-

ard King Mellon Foundation. Back in February the PAS received a grant that will amount to \$150,000 over three years. The grant is for general operating support and allows Audubon the opportunity to become established in Pennsylvania. The Mellon grant will be used to build a sustainable operation for Audubon here in Pennsylvania.

Over the next several years, the PAS will need to build a solid base of funding from individuals who care about its mission to protect birds, other wildlife and their habitats. The Richard King Mellon Foundation and the David and Lucile Packard Foundation are giving Audubon the opportunity it needs to become a true force for conservation in Pennsylvania. The ultimate success of Audubon will be up to you, our members. ❖

New Program Introduces Students To Songbirds

The Pennsylvania Audubon Society and the National Audubon Society Population Habitat Campaign in Pennsylvania has unveiled “Pennsylvania Songbirds: Activities for Students in Grades K-12.” The project, a cooperative endeavor among Audubon, the Pennsylvania Game Commission, and Pennsylvania State Parks, was funded through the Wild Resource Conservation Fund.

The program is a compilation of activities that introduce students to the life of birds, particularly songbirds. Chapters include Bird Biology, Habitat, Observing and Identifying Birds, Migration, Research, Birds and Humans, and Actions, as well as a comprehensive appendix that includes trading cards, a glossary, literature recommendations, and a wide variety of useful resources.

The project is the first comprehensive package addressing songbirds in Pennsylvania. Over the next several months facilitators will be trained on its use. All chapters will receive a copy of “Pennsylvania Songbirds” to use in educational programs. Chapter leaders are encouraged to become facilitators.

For more info about facilitator training or “Pennsylvania Songbirds” phone Marci Mowery at (717) 763-4985 or e-mail at mmowery@audubon.org. ❖

Canoe Creek State Park Nature Programs for November

Sunday, Nov. 8 — 2 P.M.

Mammals of Pennsylvania. Enjoy an afternoon learning about the mammals that are found in Pennsylvania. Slide presentation.

Meet at the Visitor Center.

Sunday, Nov. 15 — 2 P.M.

Pennsylvania Whitetail. Join Kerry Estright-Przszak, park naturalist, as she takes you on a journey through the life of the whitetails. Learn about fawn and antler development, behavior, and senses. Slides and video presentation.

Meet at the Visitor Center.

Sunday, Nov. 22 — 2 P.M.

Black Bear. Join the park naturalist as she takes you on a journey through the life history of the black bear. Slides and video presentation.

Meet at the Visitor Center.

Sunday, Nov. 29 — 2 P.M.

Wreath Making Class. Learn how to create an evergreen wreath for the holidays. A fee of \$5 will be charged for materials. Bring needle-nose pliers and wire cutters.

To register, call the park office at 695-6807. The deadline is 4 P.M., Tuesday, Nov. 24.

Meet at the Visitor Center.



JVAS Prez Terry Wentz at the Penn State Horticulture Trial Gardens during last month's field trip, telling how these chrysanthemums are being evaluated for color, uniformity, uniqueness, disease and pest resistance, and weather tolerance.

Below, JVAS members enjoy a walk through the trial gardens finding out what new plants they should grow in their flower beds and vegetable plots. From left, trip leader Charlie Hoyer, Marge Hoyer, Katharine Everts-Temple, Janet DeMuth, Janet Huber, Terry Wentz, Barb Baird, and Barb Corla. (Photos by Debbie Haine)



Food for Wildlife

"Clunk!" I bolt upright in bed. And then I remember. Another black walnut has hit the flat porch roof outside my bedroom window.

It has been the most fruitful year I can remember. Every shrub, tree, and vine has produced bountiful food for wildlife. After last year's bust, when even the wild grape crop failed, nature seems to be exuberant in its recovery.

But it is too late for the squirrels and chipmunks who starved last winter. After building up enormous populations because of a string of mild winters and ample mast crops, those populations crashed. No gray squirrels mated in January nor did chipmunks emerge from their burrows to mate in February. As the winter progressed, our feeder squirrels dwindled from a high of fifteen in mid-January to a low of eight in late February despite cramming themselves with sunflower seeds.

I didn't see the first chipmunks until mid-May, and they were all undersized. The woods seemed strangely silent. No rustling, scolding, and chirping from squirrels and chipmunks accompanied my daily walks.

Then came September and with it the crunch of thousands of fallen acorns underfoot. The hickory, black walnut, and American beech trees were also loaded with nuts. And suddenly I heard the chirping, chunking, and rustling of chipmunks in the woods. Most of them looked like juveniles. Apparently, some adult males and females had survived

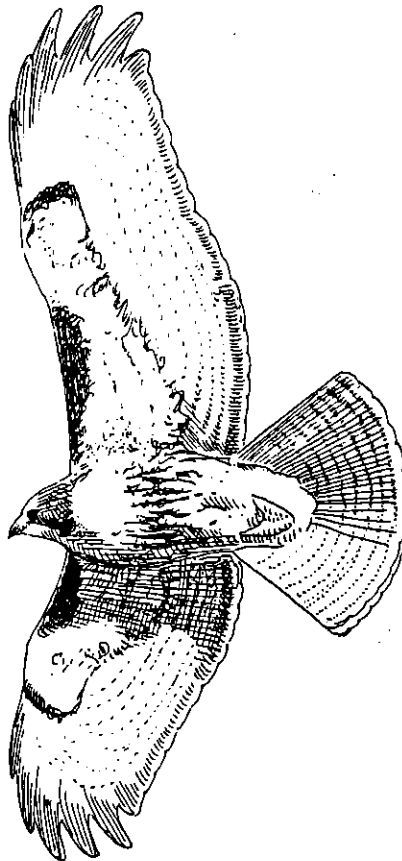
the winter. Then, energized by the abundant spring crop of maple samaras and summer crops of wild berries, wild black cherries and their stones, as well as a large insect population that both pregnant and nursing females and their young relish, the chipmunks not only mated in June but successfully raised young.

By Marcia Bonta

Squirrel numbers have not rebounded as quickly as the chipmunks'. Only a couple squirrels are harvesting our black walnuts and the woods seem to have sparse numbers of undersized squirrels. They, too, are mostly juveniles still learning the ropes. At least one squirrel didn't learn quickly enough.

As I entered the woods during an early afternoon walk in mid-September, an immature red-tailed hawk lifted off from the forest floor. At its launching pad, I found a freshly killed, small, gray squirrel lying on its back, its bloody neck buzzing with flies. The red-tail had retreated to the nearby power line right-of-way so I sat fifty feet away from the dead squirrel, hoping that the hawk would return to resume its interrupted meal.

It never did show itself then, but when I returned three hours later, it was standing on the ground a hundred feet away from where I had originally discovered the squirrel's body, again trying to begin its meal. This time I retreated at once, knowing that when the prey population crashes, the predator population also suffers. That immature red-tail had earned its dinner! ❖



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