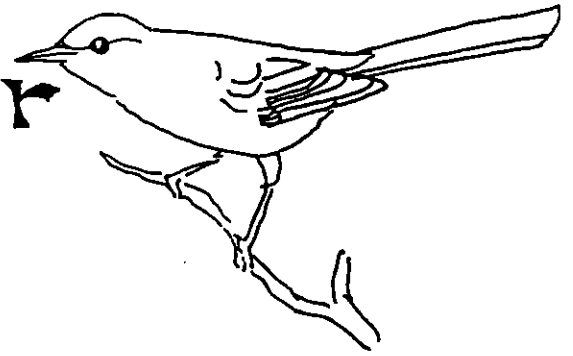


The Gnatcatcher



Newsletter of the
Juniata Valley Audubon Society

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

Vol. 30, No. 1 — February/March 1998

Shaw Run Restoration To Begin in March

By Dr. Stan Kotala

Shaw Run, like countless other streams along the Allegheny Front, has suffered immensely as a result of man's greed. Clear-cutting and mining virtually had wiped out life in the stream earlier this century. Although the forests of the Shaw Run watershed have begun to recover from this devastation, the acidity entering the stream as a result of mining will continue for centuries to come.

Fortunately, the acidic discharges can be treated to add alkalinity, thus restoring the stream's suitability for the flourishing of aquatic life. To this end, the Juniata Valley Audubon Society last year received a \$14,800 grant from the Heinz Foundation to assist the Blair County Conservation District in restoring the Shaw Run watershed.

Final designs for limestone channels and diversions have been completed, and work on the Shaw Run Restoration Project is scheduled to begin in March. Native grasses, shrubs, and trees will be planted in barren areas of the watershed in April and May. The project is to be completed by late summer, and a field trip to this area will be scheduled for JVAS members this fall.

Human greed almost destroyed Shaw Run, but now those who love God's creation are restoring a piece of Eden in this watershed. JVAS members should be proud of their role in this effort! ❖

February Program

"GLENWHITE RUN RESTORATION." Dan Saibert, of the Natural Resources Conservation Service, will update progress on the Glenwhite Run Restoration Project.

7:30 P.M., Monday, Feb. 16 at the visitor center, Canoe Creek State Park, off Rt. 22 east of Hollidaysburg.

March Program

"WATERFOWL IDENTIFICATION." Dave Kyler, JVAS board member, will give distinguishing characteristics that identify migrating waterfowl. To be followed by a March 21 field trip.

7:30 P.M., Monday, Mar. 16 at the visitor center, Canoe Creek State Park.

Field Trip

MIDDLE CREEK WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA. Observe spring migration of waterfowl. Will leave Altoona at 7 A.M.; will leave Huntingdon at 7:45 A.M. Preregister with trip leader Janet Huber at 944-5905 (W) or 942-5752 (H).

Saturday, Mar. 21

JVAS Annual Spring Banquet

At the Sassafras Cafe, on Old Rt. 220, Tipton. Rob Criswell, land management officer for the Pennsylvania Game Commission, will present a slide show on the rare flora and fauna of the Juniata Valley. See page 10 for ticket info.

Monday, Apr. 20, 6:30 P.M. (social at 6 o'clock)

Next Board Meeting

7 P.M., Monday, Feb. 2, 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

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Charlie Hoyer, Editor
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Articles may be submitted directly to the editor. The deadline for the April 1998 issue is Wednesday, March 25.

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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Vice President Terry Wentz 692-4224
Secretary Eugene Zielinski 353-8212
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Director Dave Kyler 643-6030

President's Message

I shall be ending my second term as JVAS president this April. Our bylaws prohibit me from serving more than two consecutive terms. Therefore, we shall need a new president, who will be installed at our annual banquet on April 20.

I strongly urge each of you to consider serving as JVAS president for at least one term (two years). The president's duties consist of presiding over all JVAS activities and overseeing officers, committee chairs, and directors.

Serving as JVAS president is an outstanding learning experience that will introduce you to many prominent conservationists in public and private service. It will provide you with the opportunity to shape the future of the JVAS, which, thanks to the hard work of our current board members, is brighter than ever!

If you would like to take advantage of this opportunity, please call JVAS Nominating Committee Chair Paula Ford at 695-4799 or Nominating Committee members Barb Corle at 276-3428 or Dave Kyler at 643-6030. Thanks for your help!

Stan Kotala



This is a double issue of The Gnatcatcher because Marge and I shall be vacationing in southern climes during February. You'll receive your next issue in April.
— Ed.

CONSERVATION

CORNER

By Paula Ford

Cats!

The following is a summary of an excellent article, "Cats and Wildlife: A Conservation Dilemma," by John S. Coleman, Stanley A. Temple, and Scott R. Craven that I found on the Internet. (I'll bring copies of the full article to the February meeting.) I found it particularly interesting because I see two pet cats that are allowed to roam my neighborhood every day, and I rarely see a bird at my feeders. In fact, I have refilled one of my feeders only once this winter; the other is still three-quarters full from its initial filling in October! One of the cats left out to roam the neighborhood is frequently pregnant. I don't know what happens to her kittens. This month's column is devoted to the effects of cats on birds and wildlife, followed by the authors' suggestions for "what you can do."

How many cats are there in the United States?

European colonists introduced domestic cats to the U.S. The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that there were 60 million pet cats in urban and rural regions of the United States in 1990. These estimates are based on data that include only those cats that people claim to "own" as pets — not cats that are semi-wild or free-ranging. Nationwide, approximately 30% of households have cats. In rural areas where free-ranging cats are usually not regarded as pets, approximately 60% of households have cats. The combined total of pets and free-ranging cats in the U.S. is probably more than 100 million. Because of their close association with humans, most of these cats are concentrated in areas where people live rather than in remote undeveloped areas.

What effects do domestic cats have on wildlife?

Although rural free-ranging cats have greater access to wild animals and undoubtedly take the greatest toll, even urban house pets take live prey when allowed outside. Extensive studies of the

feeding habits of free-ranging domestic cats over 50 years and four continents indicate that small mammals make up approximately 70% of these cats' prey while birds make up about 20%. The remaining 10% is a variety of other animals. The diets of free-ranging cat populations, however, reflect the food locally available. [*Comment: If you attract birds to your yard, as I do by feeding them, you can probably expect stray or free-roaming pet cats to prey on them. -PF*]

Observations of free-ranging domestic cats show that some individuals can kill more than 1000 wild animals per year, although smaller numbers are more typical. Some of the data on kills suggests that free-ranging cats living in small towns kill an average of 14 wild animals each per year. Rural cats kill many more wild animals than do urban, or suburban cats. Several studies found that up to 90% of free-ranging rural cats' diet was wild animals, and less than 10% of rural cats killed no wild animals. Recent research suggests that rural free-ranging domestic cats in Wisconsin may be killing between 8 and 217 million birds each year. The most reasonable estimates indicate that 39 million birds are killed in the state each year. Nationwide, rural cats probably kill over a billion small mammals and hundreds of millions of birds each year. Urban and suburban cats add to this toll. Some of these kills are house mice, rats and other species considered pests, but many are native songbirds and mammals whose populations are already stressed by other factors, such as habitat destruction and pesticide pollution.

Despite the difficulties in showing the effect most predators have on their prey, cats are known to have serious impacts on small mammals and birds. Worldwide, cats may have been involved in the extinction of more bird species than any other cause, except habitat destruction. Cats are contributing to the endangerment of populations of birds such as least terns, piping plovers, and loggerhead shrikes.

Not only do cats prey on many small mammals and birds, but they can outnumber and compete with native predators. Domestic cats eat many of the

same animals that native predators do. When present in large numbers, cats can reduce the availability of prey for native predators, such as hawks and weasels.

Free-ranging domestic cats may also transmit new diseases to wild animals. Domestic cats have spread feline leukemia virus to mountain lions and may have recently infected the endangered Florida panther with feline panleukopenia (feline distemper) and an immune deficiency disease. These diseases may pose a serious threat to this rare species. Some free-ranging domestic cats also carry several diseases that are easily transmitted to humans, including rabies and toxoplasmosis.

What you can do

- Keep only as many pet cats as you can feed and care for.
- Use traps, and rodent-proof storage and construction to control rodents.
- If at all possible, for the sake of your cat and local wildlife, keep your cat indoors. Confinement will eliminate unwanted reproduction, predation on wild animals, and the spread of disease. Bells are mostly ineffective in preventing predation because, even if the bell rings, it's usually too late for the prey being stalked. Declawing may reduce hunting success, but many declawed cats are still effective predators. Keeping your cats indoors helps protect the wildlife around your yard and prevents your cat from picking up diseases from strays or getting injured. The two most common causes of death for rural cats are disease and being struck by automobiles. If cats must be allowed outdoors, consider using a fenced enclosure or runway.
- Neuter your cats or prevent them from breeding, and encourage others to do so. Support or initiate efforts to require licensing and neutering of pets. In areas where such laws already exist, insist that they be enforced. For information on local licensing and neutering laws, contact your local health department or humane society.
- Locate bird feeders in sites that do not provide cover for cats to wait in ambush for birds. Cats are

a significant source of mortality among birds that come to feeders. To prevent cats from climbing to bird nests, put animal guards around any trees in your yard that may have nesting birds.

- Don't dispose of unwanted cats by releasing them in rural areas. This practice enlarges rural cat populations and is an inhumane way of dealing with unwanted cats. Cats suffer in an unfamiliar setting, even if they are good predators. Contact your local animal welfare organization for help.
- Eliminate sources of food, such as garbage or outdoor pet food dishes, that attract stray cats.
- Don't feed stray cats. Feeding strays maintains high densities of cats that kill and compete with native wildlife populations. Cat colonies will form around sources of food and grow to the limits of the food supply. Colonies can grow to include dozens of animals. Maintenance of colonies of free-ranging or feral cats through supplemental feeding benefits no one. The cats suffer because of disease and physical injury; native wildlife suffers from predation and competition, and colonies can be a source of disease for animals and humans. Those concerned with the welfare of animals can improve the lives of the many native species that suffer from lack of food and shelter by protecting and improving the habitats they require.

Authors:

John Coleman is a biologist with the Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission.

Stanley Temple is the Beers-Bascom Professor in Conservation in the Department of Wildlife Ecology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Scott Craven is a professor and Extension wildlife specialist in the Department of Wildlife Ecology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

The complete publication is available on the World Wide Web at:

<http://www.wisc.edu/wildlife/e-pubs.html>

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Blair County To Move Composting Facility

The current composting facility is located in a less-than-ideal location. If you've ever tried to take a load of brush or yard waste to the facility near Pinecroft, you know that the access road can be tricky to maneuver unless it is bone-dry. The site must be replaced because Bert Leopold originally deeded it to Logan Township in his will for recreation uses.

Now the county must find a new site, and it looks like that site will be near the Buckhorn. Instead of using the necessity for relocating the composting facility as an opportunity to look for an accessible site that would be centrally located and easy to get to, the Solid Waste Authority has jumped at the first available site — one that would be out of the way for most people and difficult to get to in less-than-ideal weather.

Let them know what you think! Write to the Blair County Department of Solid Waste and Recycling, 1301 Allegheny Street, Suite 132, Hollidaysburg, PA 16648. Ask them to establish criteria for a suitable site and then look for one that meets those criteria. Send a copy of your letter to the Blair County Commissioners at Blair County Courthouse, Allegheny Street, Hollidaysburg, PA 16648. ❖

— Paula Ford



"What kind of suet is that?"

**Environmental Education Programs
At Canoe Creek State Park**

- 2 P.M. Sunday, Feb. 1 at Visitor Center
Slide presentation: "Wildflower Folklore"
- 2 P.M. Sunday, Feb. 8 at Visitor Center
Slide presentation: "The Folklore of Animals"
- 2 P.M. Sunday, Feb. 15
"Animal Antifreeze" — Join us for a walk in the woods to discover how animals cope with cold weather. Meet at Visitor Center.
- 2 P.M. Sunday, Feb. 22
Winter wildlife walk — A guided walk along the Limestone Trail to look for signs of wildlife. Meet at Visitor Center.

Letter Perfect 101

The letter you send to a state or federal representative is one of the easiest you will ever write.

All a legislator really needs to know is (1) the issue about which you are writing, and (2) your position on that issue. The latter can usually be expressed as either "for" or "against." An example of such a letter is shown in the box.

If you are writing to express support of a particular piece of legislation, simply substitute the word *favor* for *oppose*. And that's all you need.

Many people, however, feel an urge to say more once they've taken pen in hand. A few arguments explaining your position can help your cause if they're brief and to the point. ❖

Dear Sen. Smith:
I am writing to inform you that I oppose (insert bill, proposal, or course of action you oppose here). I would very much appreciate a reply explaining your position on this important issue.
Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

Enigma

One park ranger asked another, "What do we do if we see an endangered animal eating an endangered plant?" ❖

U.S. Geological Survey Finds Widespread Pesticides in Water

The first cycle of the U.S. Geological Survey's National Water Quality Assessment has found widespread pesticides in streams and groundwater, with most of the 84 pesticide compounds investigated detected in those waters at least once, according to a preliminary summary of the assessment's first results. The assessment was conducted on 5000 samples of groundwater and surface water in 20 major hydrologic basins from 1991 to 1995, predominantly in agricultural and urban settings. The data collected are the most extensive ever compiled for such wide range of pesticides and locations. The 84 pesticides investigated account for approximately 75% of the agricultural uses and a substantial portion of urban and suburban uses in the U.S.

The assessment found pesticides more often in streams than in groundwater, with most streams containing low-level mixtures of pesticides during much of the year. Other findings include:

- At least one pesticide was found in every stream and in half the wells sampled. An average of seven to eight pesticides existed in each stream sample.
- The same herbicides were most commonly found in streams and groundwater: atrazine and metolachlor, used primarily on corn and soybeans; prometon, used primarily in urban and suburban settings; and simazine, used in both agricultural and non-agricultural settings.
- Insecticides were not often found in groundwater, but those most frequently detected in streams were diazinon, chlopyrifos, and carbaryl, all of which have substantial urban and suburban use.
- In most agricultural areas, the highest levels of pesticides — often above drinking-water standards — occur as seasonal pulses lasting from a few days to several months.

The final assessment and other publications related to the assessment are expected to be available by the end of this year. ❖ — From *Passages*, Winter '97, Newsletter of the Pa. Ass'n for Sustainable Agriculture

The National Audubon Society offers ecology camps and workshops each summer for adults and youth. Programs include Rocky Mountain ecology, field ecology for teachers, field ornithology, and more. Sessions are one to two weeks and are located in Maine, Vermont, Connecticut, Minnesota, and Wyoming. Prices vary from \$500 to \$1500 and all include meals and accommodations.

Brochures describing these rewarding opportunities for adventure and learning will be available at the next JVAS meeting in February.

AUDUBON ECOLOGY CAMPS AND WORKSHOPS

The Audubon Ecology Workshop series is offered weekly throughout the summer. We offer something for everyone: for adults 19 years of age and older, for families, and for youth ages 10-18. Field studies range from geology and marine life, to birds, mammals, plants, insects, weather, astronomy and citizen science research skills.

Camps and Workshops are offered in breathtaking settings: on a wild island in Maine, in Minnesota's northwoods, in the shadow of Wyoming's Wind River Mountains, among scenic pastures and woodlands in Vermont, and in the lush, deciduous woodlands of Connecticut.

Faculty are nationally renowned educators and specialists in field sciences, education, environmental public policy, ecology, science education and the cultural arts. College credit is available.

ENRICH THE REST OF YOUR LIFE!

FOR A FREE 1998 CATALOG CONTACT:

Audubon Ecology Camps & Workshops,
Phone: 203-869-2017 • Fax: 203-869-4437
E-mail: acw@audubon.org



Butterfly Plant of the Month — Bee Balm

By Dr. Alice Kotala

The winter holidays are over. Days are lengthening. Garden catalogs are arriving, and thoughts are turning toward the milder weather ahead and gardening 1998! Whether you are planning or expanding a butterfly-hummingbird garden or you aim to spruce-up your existing flower bed or landscape, bee balm is a wise choice.

A native perennial of the Mint Family, bee balm (*Monarda didyma*), also called Oswego tea, blooms in midsummer, producing scarlet, rounded terminal clusters an inch or more long. It grows as high as three to four feet along streambanks and in moist meadows. The plant has square stems — typical of its family — and toothed, ovate paired leaves, which are downy underneath.

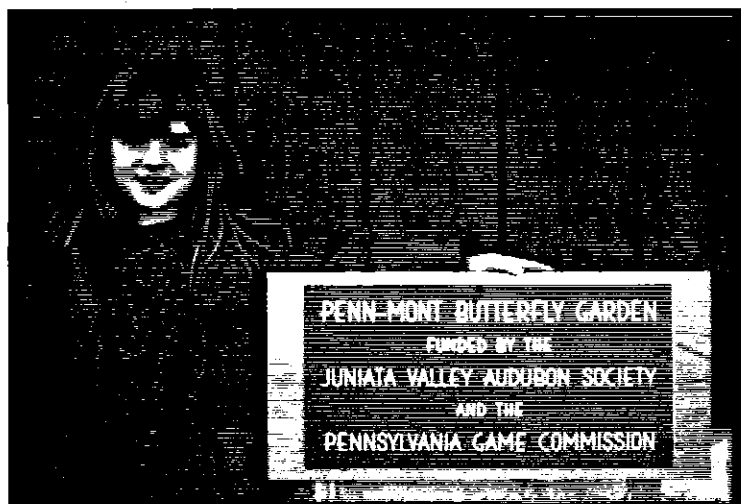
Hardy to climate zone 4, bee balm can be found in its natural range from New York to Michigan, southward in the uplands to Georgia and Tennessee; however, it has escaped from ornamental gardens to the roadsides in New England. Bee balm tends to spread rapidly in an appropriate location — sunny to diffused sunlight and moist soil — so regular thinning and dividing might be necessary if space is limited.

A similar species, wild bergamot (*Monarda fistulosa*), produces whitish, pink, or purple flowers and prefers drier soils. Its range extends westward to include Minnesota south to eastern Texas.

A 1996 survey by the North American Butterfly Association survey rated bee balm as one of the top ten butterfly garden plants for the New York-Pennsylvania-New Jersey area. The survey asked NABA members which plants were most successful in attracting butterflies to their gardens. Also, if you plant bee balm, expect to see frequent visits by ruby-throated hummingbirds. Bee balm will prove to be your most appealing, convenient, and hassle-free hummingbird feeder yet! ❖



Bee balm and wild bergamot produce magnificent blooms attractive to butterflies and hummingbirds.



The butterfly garden at the Penn-Mont Academy elementary school in Duncansville was created in spring 1997. The bee balm that the students planted already has spread profusely.

1998 Herpetological Atlas Season Begins!

February marks the start of the third year of the Pennsylvania Herpetological Atlas Project, a seven-year project to map the distribution of the Commonwealth's reptiles and amphibians.

Mid-February is the time to start looking for Jefferson salamanders emerging from hibernation and to begin listening for the calling of mountain chorus frogs along the Allegheny Front. March and April are the peak months for finding amphibians, and May and June are best for locating reptiles. By summer the bulk of the year's atlas work is done.

Last year, volunteers in Blair, Bedford, Fulton, and Huntingdon Counties made many new discoveries and recorded quite a few "county firsts." Especially significant were new records for the northern fence lizard, eastern hognose snake, five-lined skink, spotted turtle, Fowler's toad, western chorus frog, Jefferson salamander, and ridge and valley salamander.

As the Western Ridge and Valley Regional Coordinator for the atlas project, I sincerely thank the following people for their hard work and dedication to the project: Marcia Bonta, Michele Briggs, Tom Dubbs, Melissa Focht, Paula Ford, Greg Grove, Yvonne Hall, Mark Henry, Ruth Henry, Laura Jackson, Michael Jackson, Alice Kotala, Helena Kotala, Paula Martin, Dick Mock, Ben Nagy, Kerry Pruznak, Janet Shaffer, Dan Sinal, Jean Sinal, Dan Shell, Steve Wacker, and Jody Wallace.

JVAS members who want to participate in the atlas project should attend the workshops that will be held at Canoe Creek State Park's visitor center on Sunday, April 19 and Sunday, May 17 from 1-4 P.M. If you'd like to register for the workshops, call me at 946-8840. I hope to hear from you soon! ❖

(K)

JVAS Members Visit Little Juniata Natural Area

Our last field trip of 1997 found JVAS members journeying to the Little Juniata Natural Area, near Barree in Huntingdon County on November 16.

Intermittent snow squalls accompanied us as we hiked on the trail bounded by the river to one side and prominent sandstone cliffs and outcroppings to the other. The river was high and fast, making a spectacular sight with Tussey Mountain steeply rising a thousand feet above it.

The three-mile trek lasted two hours with all of us expressing the desire to return soon to this fascinating area — an outstanding example of the ridge and valley landscape. ❖

(K)



Education Chair, Dr. Alice Kotala (seated on rock), led JVAS members on a hike through the Little Juniata Natural Area to celebrate our receipt of a \$550 grant for "Stream Class."

Be sure to check out Chuck Fergus' essay, "A Bend in the River," in the January-February 1998 issue of Audubon magazine. It describes the 1.6-mile-long water gap carved through Tussey Mountain by the Little Juniata River, along with a little about its geology, flora, and fauna.

— Ed.

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!

"California Dream" Birding

By Shirley Wagoner



A birding trip in California reminds me of the song, "California Dreaming," because it's such a wonderful place to bird. I grew up in California — Orange County, no less — and started watching birds there as a young girl. I really can't remember how I got started — probably by a combination of mentors — first my parents, and later a scout leader who, unfortunately for me, moved away much too soon.

But I must say that I never actually went *birding* at that time; I just looked for birds wherever I happened to be. In fact, that's what I did until I retired from teaching three years ago. So I missed many *birding* opportunities.

Now that I've become a serious birder, I find I need to return to places where I've been before to "get it right!" So, when I traveled to Fullerton, Calif. for a fiftieth high-school class reunion, I decided to make a three-week birding trip up the California coast afterward. My sister and members of her family joined me for parts of the trip; the rest I did on my own. I had the names and phone numbers of local ABA (American Birding Association) members with me and thought I'd call some, hoping to find fellow birders to bird with. However, information in the books I took with me, *A Birder's Guide to Southern California* and *Birder's Guide to Northern California*, steered me to wonderful places to bird and enabled me to meet other birders. I had a marvelous time birding with relatives, other birders, and on my own — and I never did make any of those calls.

The weather was dry and warm, except in the mountains at night, so I was able to camp much of the time. Camping provides a good start for a day of birding because you don't have to go anywhere to get started and it's easy to get up early off the hard ground! Sometimes camping gets you up too early,

as the in Angeles Mountains, when my sister awakened me at 4 A.M. because she was freezing in her summer-weight sleeping bag. Mostly, however, the altitude was low and the weather was reasonable. At that time we were headed for the Los Padres National Forest, where we hoped to be lucky enough to see free-flying California condors. However, because we didn't know to phone for information about where these huge, far-flying birds were hanging out at the time, we didn't spot any condors. (I do have a phone number now, in case any readers will be out there and would want to try for a look at them.)

We then continued to the Carrizo Plain, hoping to see the sandhill cranes that nest there in late fall. The wet season was late this year, however, so they had not yet arrived. (I had missed the presence of a sandhill crane in a marsh known as the Curtin Wetland, near Milesburg, Pennsylvania last spring, so this was my second miss.) But we hadn't wasted our time. By then we saw nearly fifty species, several of which were life birds for me. These were white-fronted goose, wrentit, yellow-billed magpie, lark sparrow, spotted towhee, and savannah sparrow. We also observed two coyotes and a bobcat.

We proceeded to San Luis Obispo, where my sister left me to return home. In a small oceanside park recommended in one of the books, I found no life birds but I did find a fellow birder from near San Diego. Thanks to him I was able to spend the following day birding with a group of local birders who knew all the local birds and were searching for reported rarities. We spent several hours at Morro Beach observing shorebirds — easy for them, but not for me — and then went to the state park where I was camped. I didn't list any of the day's shorebirds because I didn't feel that they were "mine" yet. However, we did very well in the campground, where a rare Grace's warbler was the "bird of the

day." I also added Nuttall's woodpecker, rufous-crowned sparrow, and Bewick's wren to my life list.

The next day I spent several hours back at Morro Beach, identifying the shorebirds there on my own, and added marbled godwit, black turnstone, black oystercatcher, Thayer's gull, pomarine jaeger, and pelagic cormorant to my life list. Monarch butterflies were extremely common in this area and probably winter in nearby eucalyptus groves.

Other birds identified in the Morro Bay area included western, California, mew, and ring-billed gulls; snowy and great egrets; least, spotted, and semipalmated sandpipers; ruby-crowned and golden-crowned kinglets; red-tailed and red-shouldered hawks; American kestrel; long-billed curlew; willet; marbled godwit; Tennessee warbler; common yellowthroat; northern harrier; turkey vulture; red phalarope; bushtit; California quail; black phoebe; northern flicker (red-shafted race); brown pelican; canyon wren; white-crowned, Lincoln's, and rufous-crowned sparrow; American avocet; and least and royal terns.

Continuing north along the coast, I stopped for a day to visit San Simeon, the Hearst "castle." The noteworthy bird of that day was a white-tailed kite, a species that became more common the farther north I traveled. I heard a great horned owl and coyotes there also. As I made my way north I stopped at two state parks mentioned in the book and identified a hermit thrush as well as many other birds already mentioned.

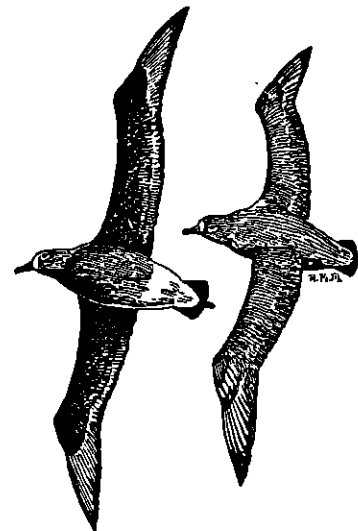
I paused at Monterey to take a pelagic trip on the bay with Debbie Shearwater, of Shearwater Journeys. Shearwaters might have been the birds of the day — they were fairly common on the bay — but a black-footed albatross and an out-of-range yellow-billed loon still in breeding plumage eclipsed the four species of shearwaters! A parasitic jaeger and some Cassin's auklets also were seen, as were two species of dolphins and a large ocean sunfish.

After leaving Monterey, I visited the Salinas estuary and then stopped at Elkhorn Slough, where I fell in with local birders. We spent a long and productive day together, seeing many water birds as

well as land birds. It took most of an hour to identify a rather distant but conveniently stationary Cooper's hawk. We needed all our scopes and books to arrive at a consensus on this one! I certainly had learned that birders form an informal fraternity of people who are happy to share their knowledge and time with one another, even on first acquaintance. It was this happy fact that helped make the trip so special for me.

After taking the "scenic route" through part of the Redwoods National Forest inland from Santa Cruz, I made my way to Route 101 and motored directly through San Francisco, across the Golden Gate Bridge, and up to Ukiah to my sister's home north of the town. My final days of birding were spent at Point Reyes National Seashore and the Mendocino coast. I added only a few more birds to my life list there but reidentified many that I had been seeing along the coast and inland. At Mendocino, a peregrine falcon perched high on the rocks above the surf while surf scoters rode the rocky surf near the shore, defying the rocks as they either dived through the waves or floated amid the foam. And we had a good look at a Say's phoebe by the lighthouse steps.

We visited the banding station, where we saw a California quail and a fox sparrow in the hand. A pair of red-tailed hawks courted with spectacular flight displays high above the point where the lighthouse stands — a fitting climax to an excellent birding trip! ❖



Twentieth Anniversary

A gray dawn and a light snow falling. Another less-than-auspicious Christmas Bird Count day, or so we thought as we plodded three miles up and down ravines in search of birds.

For twenty years the Juniata Valley Audubon Society's CBC has been a family affair.

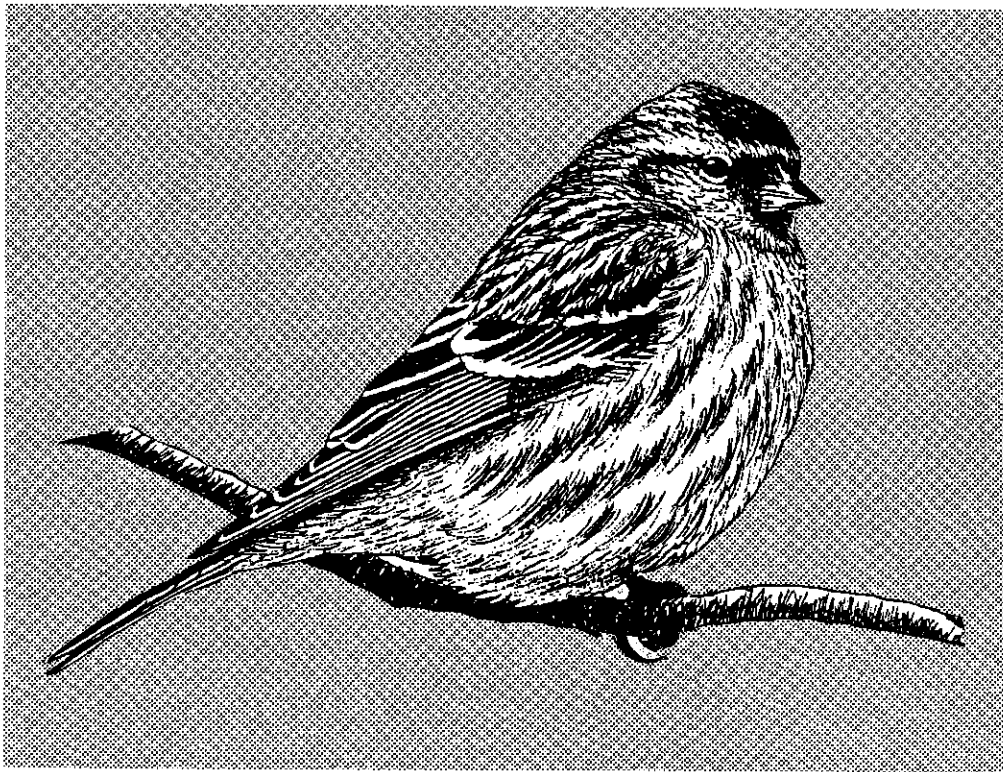
On this 27th day of December, Bruce and I headed west on Brush Mountain while two of our sons, Steve and Mark, headed east. They covered about twice as much ground as we did over better bird terrain.

Still, we were surprised not to hear or see a bird until we reached the Far Field thicket. Usually the

Grouse Hollow in honor of the CBC year in which we counted thirty-five ruffed grouse there. Although we found no grouse, we did encounter our first (and only) small flock of foraging birds — chickadees, titmice, juncos, white-breasted nuthatches, and a hairy woodpecker.

On we went to the hunting lodge property, but the thick hedgerows of autumn olive — usually filled with birds — were silent. So we trudged back over our neighbor's property, through an area that had given us flickers and robins in the past, but on this day yielded not one bird.

By Marcia Bonta



Well, at least we were getting plenty of exercise, I consoled myself, and covering areas we rarely have time to explore. The CBC is a grand excuse to spend an entire day outside, testing our ability to move over rough terrain as we grow older. And the winter woods, lightly dusted with snow, were beautiful.

As we crossed back over Far Field, it stopped snowing. The sky was still gray, but at least I could pull my binoculars out and stop wiping snow off my glasses. At that

thicket is alive with birds. One year it gave us a gray catbird; another year a hermit thrush. This year, though, only one pileated woodpecker called faintly in the distance.

We carefully threaded our way over and around slippery, snow-covered rocks down a steep ravine until we reached our neighbor's old logging road, which we followed up hill to what we call Ruffed

moment, we were halted in our tracks by a chorus of bird calls. A grove of black birches, loaded with catkins, was also loaded with at least 200 common redpolls that were more intent on eating than on avoiding two excited bird-watchers.

We sat down on a fallen tree and watched for a long time as they wheeled back and forth over the treetops, then settled down to eat, first on one tree,

then another, before the whole flock finally took off. I was absolutely ecstatic. After walking all morning and seeing practically nothing, we had hit the jackpot.

But that is the allure of a CBC. Almost always we are surprised by an unexpected sighting. For Steve and Mark it was three yellow-rumped warblers, a Cooper's hawk, and a great horned owl. But they didn't see any redpolls. Neither did anyone else. We had, though, and it made our day! ❖

JVAS Banquet To Be at Sassafras Cafe

The annual JVAS spring banquet will be held at 6:30 P.M., Monday, Apr. 20, at the Sassafras Cafe (old 5th Wheel Restaurant) on Old Route 220 north

of the Bellwood Exit of I-99. A social will begin at 6 o'clock with punch and cheese & crackers. A family-style dinner will begin with a fruit cup and feature both roast turkey and beef with all the trimmings, including dessert.

Rob Criswell, land management officer for the Pa. Game Commission, will give a slide show on the rare flora and fauna of the Juniata Valley. Afterward, the '98 JVAS Conservation Award will be presented followed by drawings for door prizes.

Mail the enclosed reservation form with a check (\$15 per person) to Marge Hoyer, P.O. Box 32, Tyrone, PA 16686. **Seating is limited** at the Sassafras Cafe, so don't delay. Checks must be received by Monday, Apr. 13. ❖ — *Marge Hoyer*

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Juniata Valley Audubon Society
R.R. 3, Box 866
Altoona, PA 16601



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"The Gnatcatcher"

A monthly newsletter, *The Gnatcatcher*, is sent to all JVAS members. If you're not a member but want to receive the newsletter, send your name, address, and a \$10 check, payable to JVAS, to:

Marge Hoyer, JVAS Treasurer
P.O. Box 32
Tyrone, PA 16686-0032

JVAS Speakers Bureau

The JVAS can provide speakers for schools, clubs, and other organizations. To arrange for a program, phone Education Chair Alice Kotala at 946-8840. If your group would like a program on a topic that's not listed, Alice may be able to find someone to satisfy your needs.

Topics Available

Acid Rain	Amphibians of Pa.
Beavers	Biodiversity
Bird Identification	Birds In the Balance
Birds of the Juniata Valley	Black Bears
Bluebirds	Coyotes
Bird Identification	Forest Stewardship
Fossils	Partners in Flight
Plant Biology	Reprints of Pa.
Ruffed Grouse	Soils
Spring Warblers	Stream Restoration
Water Quality Monitoring	Waterfowl
Wetlands	Wildflowers
Winter Bird Feeding	Wolves

Field Trips Available

Backyard Birds, Trees, and Wildflowers
Fern Identification
Fossil Walks
Nature Hikes, K-12
Water Quality Monitoring

Bluebird Monitoring

JVAS members monitor Eastern Bluebird nesting boxes at Canoe Creek State Park during the breeding season to record data and to provide for the Bluebirds' welfare.

Officers

President	Terry Wentz 692-4224
Vice President	Charlie Hoyer 684-7376
Secretary	Eugene Zielinski 353-8212
Treasurer	Marge Hoyer 684-7376

Committee Chairs

Membership	Charlie Hoyer 684-7376
Programs	Terry Wentz 692-4224
Conservation	Dr. Stan Kotala 946-8840
Field Trips	Janet Huber 942-5752
Publications and	Charlie Hoyer 684-7376
Education	Dr. Alice Kotala 946-8840
Hospitality	Barb Corle 276-3428
Historian	Barb Baird 946-0256

Directors

Fund-raising Director	Anne Borland 695-9718
Director of Ornithology	Robert Haine 695-8239
Director at Large	Dore Kyster 643-6030
Terry Wentz	Charlie & Marge Hoyer
405 Lutz Ln.	P.O. Box 32
Port Matilda, PA 16870	Tyrone, PA 16686

If you're interested in serving on a committee, phone any chairperson. Join us and help shape the future of the JVAS.

Board Meetings

This year's Board meetings will be held 7 p.m. in the Visitor Center at Canoe Creek State Park on the following first Tuesdays of the month:
Oct. 6, Dec 1, Feb. 2, and Apr. 6.
All members are welcome!

Juniata Valley Audubon Society



Fall 1998

Programs and Field Trips

The Juniata Valley Audubon Society meets in September, October, November, February, March, and May on the third Monday of the month at 7:30 p.m. (business meeting at 7 p.m.) in the Visitor Center at Canoe Creek State Park.

Visitors are always welcome!

R.R. 3, Box 866
Altoona, Pennsylvania 16801

What is JVAS?

The Juniata Valley Audubon Society, chartered in 1969, is a chapter of the National Audubon Society covering the Southern Alleghenies region. With members numbering over 300, the JVAS is one of 25 Audubon chapters in Pennsylvania.

The mission of the National Audubon Society is "to conserve and restore natural ecosystems — focusing on birds, other wildlife, and their habitats — for the benefit of humanity and the Earth's biological diversity."

If you'd like to find out more about the JVAS, you're invited to visit with us at one of our regular meetings or to come along with us on a field trip. You're always welcome!

To join, ✂ the coupon, fill out, and mail to:

Juniata Valley Audubon Society
R.R. 3, Box 866
Altoona, PA 16601-9206

You'll receive the bimonthly *Audubon* magazine, each one filled with superb nature photography and in-depth reporting on environmental issues. You'll also receive JVAS' newsletter, *The Gnatcatcher*, containing reports of local conservation topics and nature themes.

NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY Membership Application

YES, I want to join the Juniata Valley Audubon Society and the National Audubon Society at the special Introductory Rate of \$20.

As a senior citizen or student, I'm eligible to join for only \$15.

My \$ _____ check, payable to the *National Audubon Society*, is enclosed.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ PA _____

Fall 1998 Schedule

Sept. 21, Monday, 7 P.M.

MEETING/PROGRAM: "FLUTTERBY 101."

Lycoming Audubon Society President Gerry Zeidler, along with his wife Mary Ann, will present a primer on butterflies, including their life cycle, natural history, conservation, identification of common species, and butterfly gardening.

Sept. 26, Saturday morning

FIELD TRIP: TO LIMEROCK ORNAMENTAL GRASS NURSERY, IN STORMSTOWN, AND TO PENN STATE'S TRIAL GARDEN.

Norm Hooven, owner of Limerock Ornamental Grasses, Inc., will guide a tour of one of the largest commercial collections of ornamental grasses. Limerock specializes in grasses, fall-blooming perennials, wildflowers, and woody shrubs. Afterward, we shall go to PSU to view the Trial Garden, which contains new varieties of flowers and vegetables being tested for the home garden.

Meet for breakfast at Joe LaScala's Restaurant (on Old Rt. 220 between Tyrone and Bald Eagle) at 8 A.M., after which we shall travel 20 minutes to the nursery. Then, we'll jaunt over to Penn State. To top off the day, we'll stop by at the Creamery for some delicious ice cream.

Trip leader: Charlie Hoyer 684-7376

Oct. 19, Monday, 7 P.M.

MEETING/PROGRAM: "SAVING THE 1000 STEPS." JVAS member Steve Stroman, also a board member of the Huntingdon County Historical Society and a member of the "Save Our Steps" committee, 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. To be followed by a field trip the following Saturday (October 24).

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

FIELD TRIP: THE THOUSAND STEPS.

Hike up The Thousand Steps (see above). See the remains of the dinky railroad repair shop and great views of the Juniata River, Mapleton, and Mount Union from the top of the incline plane.

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

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

FIELD TRIP: STONE MOUNTAIN HAWK-WATCH PLATFORM. Observe as many as eight different species of migrating raptors including golden eagles.

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

Note: Dave will be monitoring the raptor migration over Stone Mountain on several days through Nov. 30. Call him for an update of his schedule.

Trip leader: Dave Kyle 643-6030

Nov. 16, Monday, 7 P.M.

MEETING/PROGRAM: "FALCONRY

TODAY." Falconer Mark Shields, of Sinking Valley, will discuss the "sport of kings" as it exists today. He'll give a short history of the sport and address the falcon species used, the equipment necessary, and the permitting and apprenticeship required. Mark also will have on hand at least one live falcon.

Dec. 19, Saturday, all day

1998 CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT. (Watch for details in the November issue of *The Gnatcatcher*.)

Following the count again this year will be a covered-dish supper at the Hoyers' residence on Brush Mountain.

CBC coordinator: Debbie Haine 695-8239

Note: To facilitate the JVAS field trip program, interested participants should preregister with the trip leader.