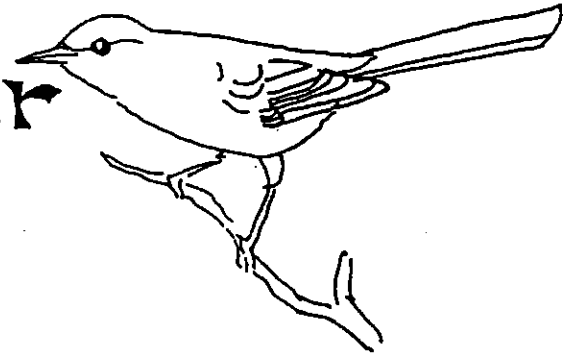


The Gnatcatcher



Newsletter of the
Juniata Valley Audubon Society

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

Vol. 30, No. 3 – May/June 1998

1998 Pennsylvania Acidic Deposition Conference Slated

The 1998 Pennsylvania Acidic Deposition Conference will be held September 14–16, 1998 at the Nittany Lion Inn, University Park, Pennsylvania. The conference will present current acidic deposition research to natural resource managers, elected officials, and natural resource policy makers.

An international panel of forest health/acidification experts will spend the week prior to the conference touring Pennsylvania forests and visiting with scientists at work on the problems of forest decline and forest regeneration. This group of distinguished scientists will apply their particular areas of expertise to these problems and report on their findings during a special session of the conference.

A preliminary conference agenda and registration form soon will be sent to individuals who have expressed an interest in Pennsylvania forest health/acidification issues in the past. Other interested people may contact Joy Drohan at (814) 863-0037 or by e-mail at jrn131@psu.edu to be added to the mailing list. ❖

Café Audubon

Attention all ecologically conscious coffee lovers! Now you can enjoy the first certified organic *and* certified shade-grown coffee thanks to an alliance among the National Audubon Society, the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center, the Eco Organic Coffee Company, several roasters, and a small group of traditional coffee growers. Unlike mass-produced coffee from technified plantations on deforested land, shade canopy farms can operate organically without chemical fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides; and the trees provide food and shelter for thousands of migratory birds — much like a natural forest.

Café Audubon, currently a blend of Mexican Altura and Salvadoran coffees, is mountain-grown, and reportedly richer in flavor than the high-yielding and hybrid strains of coffee grown on modern “sun farms.”

So if you want to help preserve the winter homes of familiar backyard birds such as hummingbirds, orioles, and warblers, please consider Café Audubon. Call (202) 861-2242 for more information or (888) 326-2633 (toll-free) to order. ❖

— Dr. Alice Kotala

June Program

“PENNSYLVANIA'S STATE BIRD — THE RUFFED GROUSE.”
Dr. Stan Kotala, JVAS past president, will give a slide show on the ecology and life history of the ruffed grouse.

7:30 p.m., Monday, June 15 at the Visitor Center, Canoe Creek State Park, off Rte 22 east of Hollidaysburg.

Next Board Meeting

7 p.m., Monday, June 1 at the Visitor Center, Canoe Creek State Park. All members are welcome.

The Gnatcatcher

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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 1998 issue is Wednesday, Aug. 26.

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	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	Charlie Hoyer	684-7376
Conservation	Stan Kotala	946-8840
Field Trips	Janet Huber	942-5752
Publications & Publicity	Charlie Hoyer	684-7376
Education	Alice Kotala	946-8840
	Cochair, Debora Haine	695-8239
Finance (<i>Open</i>)		
Hospitality	Barb Corle	276-3428
Historian	Barb Baird	946-0256

Directors

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

President's Message

Let me introduce myself as your new JVAS President. I've been a member of the JVAS for 16 years, joining shortly after moving to Canoe Creek in 1981. For the past year I've served as Vice President with the major assignment to arrange programs for our monthly meetings.

I moved to the Altoona area to assume the job duties of Park Manager at Canoe Creek State Park. I've worked for the Bureau of State Parks for more than 25 years with work locations at Codorus, Gifford Pinchot, State Parks Region 3 Office, Shawnee, and Canoe Creek. In 1987 I also was placed in charge of Trough Creek and Warriors Path State Parks. So, now I'm Park Manager for the Canoe Creek State Park Complex. Complexing is one of the state government's ways to downsize. I anticipate to work another 8 to 10 years with state parks until my retirement in about 2007.

As a lot of us, I'm an avid fan of Penn State sports. Basketball season has just ended with baseball now underway. We all have heard the phrase, "step up to the plate." Cal Ripken, of the Baltimore Orioles, is a wonderful example of this phrase. Cal stepped up and surpassed the all-time consecutive game starts for a major-league baseball player in 1996. Jerry Dunn, PSU Basketball head coach, used the words "step up" often this past season to encourage and express the need for team players to give the extra effort in the face of adversity.

This is what needs to be done by JVAS members to keep our Chapter a strong, viable conservation organization.

I stepped up to lead our Chapter. Now, it's your turn to step up and help our team of officers and board members. I'll be calling upon you to help run our organization. Please say yes and step up!

Jerry Wentz

This is a double issue of The Gnatcatcher because I underwent abdominal surgery and was laid up for a while. The next issue will be in September. Have a great summer!
— Ed.

**CONSERVATION
CORNER**
Dr. Stan Kotala

Rhonda Calhoun Receives 1998 JVAS Conservation Award

Each year the JVAS presents its conservation award to a member of the community who has provided outstanding leadership in environmental protection.

This year's recipient, Rhonda Calhoun, is a sixth-grade teacher at the Frankstown Elementary School who always has had a special interest in environmental education. This interest inspired her to create the Frankstown Outdoor Environmental Education Center, which provides students with hands-on opportunities for learning about the natural world.

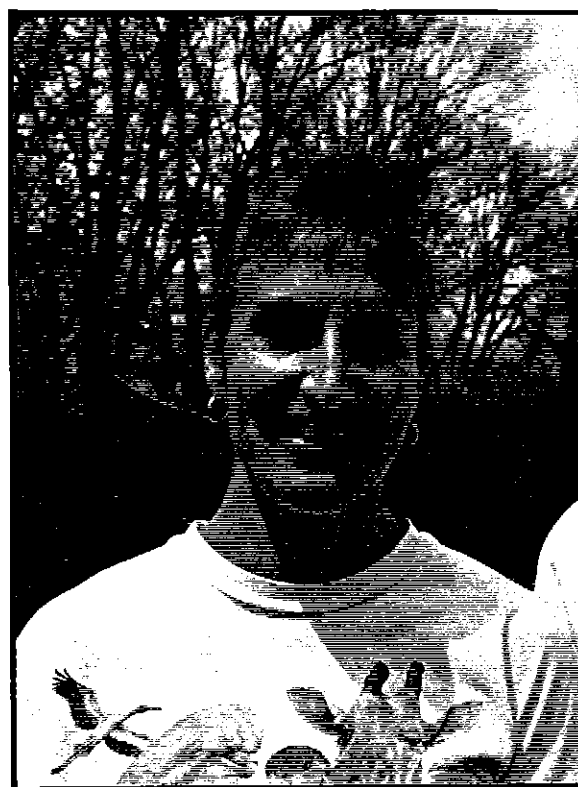
An outgrowth of her environmental curriculum has been the establishment of a large greenhouse on school grounds that is used for the propagation of native plants — particularly wetland species.

Ms. Calhoun also initiated the creation of a wetland between the school building and the Frankstown Branch of the Juniata River. It was constructed in 1997 and will be used for environment education this year.

Recognizing the need to restore the area between the school and her newly created wetlands, Ms. Calhoun, with the assistance of the JVAS Education Committee, applied for and received a riparian reforestation grant from the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay. The area, which was once almost two acres of mowed lawn, has been converted into a forested riparian wetland.

This outstanding environmental education area along the Frankstown Branch is used for nature study, water quality monitoring, and conservation education.

Rhonda Calhoun inspires us all by showing that one committed person can accomplish so many great things in such a short amount of time. We congratulate her and thank her! ❖



Rhonda Calhoun

Audubon Adventures — 1998-99

Audubon Adventures is the National Audubon Society's ecological science curriculum especially designed by professional educators for students of grades 4 through 7. New topics for 1998-99 have been determined, and it's not too early to sign up. 1998-99 subjects include schoolyard habitat, ecosystems, wildlife homes, rivers of the U.S., colonial nesting waterbirds, and a migration/conservation project. Classroom kit cost is \$35, which includes four newspaper issues (enough copies for 32 students), a videotape, a teacher's manual, and more.

Phone Education Chair Alice Kotala at 946-8840 if you want a brochure and ordering information.

The JVAS has one 1997-98 individual kit available, which we will give at no charge to an interested teacher who requests it. Just call the Education Chair to secure the kit; it can be picked up at the June JVAS meeting. ❖ — *Dr. Alice Kotala*

Juniata College Prepares for Stream Monitoring

By Brian C. Eggert

Members of the Juniata College community and the newly formed JC Environmental Science Society, in conjunction with the Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF), will embark on macroinvertebrate monitoring of streams in the Juniata watershed. Macroinvertebrates, or "stream bugs," spend much of their lives in water; therefore, they are a great indicator of a stream's water quality. Just as macroinvertebrates depend on the water for life, humans need clean streams for drinking water and recreation.

It is the goal of JC to ensure local streams are clean for wildlife and man by conducting a quarterly macroinvertebrate assessment of numerous streams and rivers in the Juniata watershed and building a network of stream-quality information that can be accessed by concerned citizens. Placing a watchful eye on streams of the Juniata watershed will permit faster identification and correction of adverse conditions.

The project has been made possible with the assistance of Deborah Nardone (CBF), Dr. Stan Kotala (JVAS), and Chuck Yohn (JC Raystown Field Station Director). ❖



JVAS Conservation Chair Dr. Stan Kotala (*right*) uses an aquatic kick net to obtain a sample of benthic macroinvertebrates from Crooked Creek, in Huntingdon County, as Juniata College students look on.

Butterfly Plant of the Month — Coreopsis

By Dr. Alice Kotala

Species of the genus *Coreopsis*, commonly known as tickseeds, are highly regarded as nectar plants for reliably attracting butterflies to your garden all summer long. *Coreopsis* species, when planted in full sun, have one of the most extended blooming periods for a perennial in the butterfly garden — June to September.

I also have found that thread-leaf coreopsis, or whorled coreopsis, (*C. verticillata*) is aesthetically useful as a border plant, providing a tame, compact

habit, one to two feet high, of delicate filament-like foliage as background for its profusion of blooms. The popular lance-leaved coreopsis (*C. lanceolata*) is taller, erect, and slender with lanceolate leaves and three to four teeth at the tips of its showy petals. Garden coreopsis (*C. tinctoria*), a garden escape in eastern North America, can be distinguished from native wild species by the brown coloration at the base of its petals. ❖



Nature Discovery Camp — 1998

The JVAS once again will sponsor a Nature Discovery Camp for students ages 6 to 9 at Penn-Mont Academy, in Duncansville. This summer's version is three weeks long and will explore herpetology, the mammals of Pennsylvania, and insects. In addition to presentations by JVAS members, special guest speakers include April Claus, of the Pennsylvania Herpetological Atlas Project; Don Martin, of the Pennsylvania Game Commission; Joe and Norma Bayer, of Bayer's Mountain Honey and Beeswax Crafts in Tyrone; and Gerry Zeidler, recent past president of the Central Pennsylvania Chapter of the North American Butterfly Association.

Each week the students will gain field experience at Canoe Creek State Park under the direction of Park Naturalist Kerry Estright-Pruznak and her volunteers. ❖

— Dr. Alice Kotala

Frankstown Riparian Restoration

April 22, 1998 — Earth Day



Keri Little discusses the need for wetlands preservation and restoration in the Juniata Valley.



These young men prepared the soil for the seeding of native rushes and sedges.



The JVAS Education Committee applied for and received a \$500 grant for the restoration of this riparian area behind the Frankstown Elementary School. Native trees and shrubs were purchased by the JVAS and planted by students on Earth Day 1998.



Students plant red-twig dogwood (*Cornus sericea*), an excellent source of berries for birds.



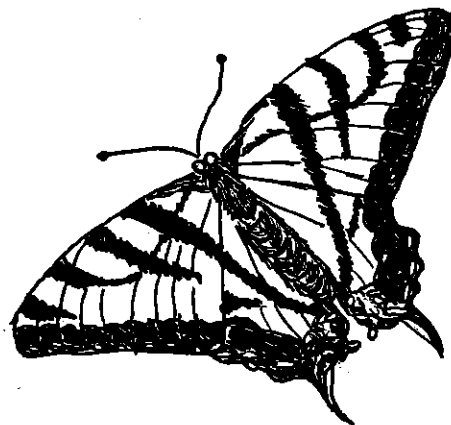
Frankstown's ecological restorationists relax after a day of hard work in the wetlands.

Come and Learn About Butterflies!

All JVAS members are invited to attend a butterfly program and exhibit presented by Mr. and Mrs. Gerry Zeidler, Thursday, July 23 from 10:30 to 11:30 A.M. at Penn-Mont Academy, Duncansville. Mr. Zeidler, a retired Pennsylvania Game Commission wildlife conservation officer, recent past president of the Central Pennsylvania Chapter of the North American Butterfly Association, and past president of the Lycoming Audubon Society, has extensive experience in raising and photographing butterflies and in butterfly gardens. He and his wife plan to bring live specimens of butterflies and plants.

If you're interested in butterflies, this is a JVAS event you won't want to miss! Please phone Education Chair Dr. Alice Kotala at 946-8840 if you plan to attend. ❖

— Dr. Alice Kotala



One year ago the Women's Expedition for the Environment saw twelve women hiking and biking across the Juniata Valley guided by JVAS Past President Dr. Stan Kotala and Helena Kotala. One of the sites the group visited inspired expedition member Donna Ruff to write the following poem.

Detweiler Run

I notice the twists and turns of the hemlocks' gnarly roots as they whirl up through my sense of space and time to feed the slow growth of these old survivors.

The way the sun lights the dance of a fallen needled branch as it lay caught in the flow of the rushing water.

The way the fresh mixed scent of pine, spring water, wildflowers, ferns, and grass heightens by awareness.

The way the moss cushions my rest in a pillow of green.

The way the continuity of the earth cycle calms my soul.

The way the laughter of my female companions mingles and sings with the melody of the stream.

The way, in these ways, the Mother cradles me, rocking me back to where I belong.

Executing the Innocent

For many hard-bitten outdoors people, the sizzle and pop of insects frying on the electric grid of a bug zapper provides reassurance that some small justice exists in this world after all. But according to a University of Delaware researcher, that sense of satisfaction is a false one, since the devices almost always execute the innocent and let the guilty fly away to bite another day. In fact, Doug Tallamy's studies indicate that outdoor use of bug zappers has the potential to damage fisheries and do other environmental harm.

During a recent summer, Tallamy collected and analyzed the kill from electric insect traps at six sites in suburban Newark, New Jersey. The results were both astonishing and deeply disturbing. Of the nearly 14,000 zapped insects Tallamy examined, only thirty-one — or less than one quarter of one percent — were mosquitos or other biting bugs. It turns out that mosquitos aren't attracted to the black lights bug zappers use as a lure.

So what kinds of bugs constituted the remaining 13,969 tiny carcasses in Tallamy's traps? The researcher found members of 104 non-biting insect species and, although the traps were not located near water, almost half of all the crispy critters belonged to just two families of aquatic insects that trout and anglers depend on: caddisflies and midges.

"Midges and caddisflies are an important part of the aquatic food chain," Tallamy says. "Diminishing their populations has an effect on other populations, including the frogs and fish that feed on them."

The conclusion Tallamy draws from his research is that, "The heavy toll on non-target insects and the near absence of biting flies in catches suggest that electric insect traps are worthless for biting-fly reduction and probably are counterproductive to consumers and the larger ecosystem."

— Fly Rod & Reel, *Mar/Apr 1998*

Epidemic Threatening Our Small Birds

A serious bacterial epidemic is threatening many of our small birds, goldfinches and pine siskins in particular. Have you bird feeders out there picked up any goldfinches or pine siskins in your yards lately? If you are feeding them on a regular basis, you almost certainly have seen sick birds sitting all fluffed up and acting too tame so that they are easily approached. Perhaps you have picked up a dead bird or two. There is a reason for this undesired phenomenon. It seems that a large portion of the northeastern and north-central states have been suffering an epidemic of salmonella that is killing many of our finches and siskins. This has been confirmed at Penn State University for our area.

There are two remedies for this. One is to stop feeding birds altogether and allow them to return to their natural foods, which are certainly available at this time. The second is to take the feeders you use and sanitize them on a weekly basis with a 10% solution of Chlorox and water and also to clean up areas where seeds collect under feeders or on platform feeders. Since the salmonella is spread by contaminated feces, these areas must be thoroughly cleaned. Bird baths also should be sanitized weekly and the water changed frequently.

Do not allow your pets to consume these dead or sick birds; they also may be susceptible to certain kinds of salmonella. And after handling feeders, people should scrub their hands thoroughly, especially if not wearing gloves. The rainy weather we've been having may encourage the spread of disease, so people need to be especially careful at this time. A word to the wise . . . !

— Shirley Wagoner

Don't forget to send your BiLo Foods and Riverside Markets cash register tapes to Anne Borland at 138A Larch St., Hollidaysburg, PA 16648. Anne redeems the tapes for \$\$\$ for the JVAS.

Canoe Creek State Park Nature Programs

Saturday, May 30 — 8:30 P.M.

History of Canoe Creek. The Canoe Creek and Scotch Valley area is rich in history. Learn how the early settlers lived and dealt with the natives.

Meet at the amphitheater; in case of rain meet at the Visitor Center.

Friday, June 5 — 8:30 P.M.

Nature's Banquet. Slide presentation.

Meet at the amphitheater; in case of rain, meet at the Visitor Center.

Sunday, June 7 — 9 P.M.

Astronomy Adventures for the Family. Discussion and activities for the family.

Meet at picnic pavilion #2.

Wednesday, June 10 — 9 A.M.

Walk on the Limestone Trail. Guided walk.

Meet at the Visitor Center.

Saturday, June 13 — 8:30 P.M.

Whitetail Country. Discussion and video.

Meet at the amphitheater; in case of rain, meet at the Visitor Center.

Sunday, June 14 — 7 P.M.

Beaver Watch. Discussion and guided walk.

Meet at the Visitor Center.

Saturday, June 20 — 8:30 P.M.

Owl Prowl. Slide presentation and guided walk.

Meet at the Visitor Center.

Wednesday, June 24 — 9 A.M.

Walk on Moore's Hill Trail. Guided walk; moderate hiking difficulty.

Meet at the Visitor Center.

Saturday, June 27 — 8 P.M.

Native People of Pennsylvania: Indian Culture and History. Guest speaker is Dr. Marshall Becker, professor of anthropology at West Chester University.

Meet at the Visitor Center.

Sunday, June 28 — 8 P.M.

Bat Walk. Discussion and walk to the "bat church."

Park and meet at picnic pavilion #1.

For more information on the programs, please phone the Canoe Creek State Park Visitor Center at 696-6025.

Audubon Council Report

At the spring meeting of the Audubon Council of Pennsylvania, Carmen Santasania, of State College, was elected to a two-year term as president. Jeffrey Au, of Pittsburgh, will continue to be our Southwestern Regional Representative.

The state office will be moving from Camp Hill to the shores of Wildwood Lake, in Harrisburg. Bids are out to construct an environmental education center at the lake. Through a cooperative effort with Dauphin County Parks, Audubon will be housed in a wing of this building. Construction should begin soon.

The ACP will change its name to the Pennsylvania Audubon Society to reflect our state office. ❖

JVAS Officers Elected and Installed

The election of officers for the Juniata Valley Audubon Society resulted in the following individuals, who were installed at the Annual Meeting:

President: Terry Wentz, of Port Matilda

Vice President: Charlie Hoyer, of Sinking Valley

Secretary: Eugene Zielinski, of Bellefonte

**Treasurer:* Marge Hoyer, of Sinking Valley

*Elected in 1997

Early Bloomers

What a wonderful spring it has been for those of us who admire the blossoms and young leaves of forest deciduous trees. The warm spell at the end of March brought out many flowering trees and the continual cold of April kept them in an immature stage for weeks. This gave me plenty of time to admire what usually is only a brief phenomenon.

By Marcia Bonta

Throughout April the mountain glowed with the pastel colors of early spring. First came the orange and red blossoms of red maple trees, followed by dangling bunches of scarlet red maple keys that turned many of the trees into autumnal-like torches. Gold catkins shimmered on black birch branches. Even tiny oak leaves added delicate shades of golden-green, russet, pale orange, and dark red to the scene. On clear days against a blue sky the colors glittered in the brilliant sunlight.

The earliest colorful blossoms served as a backdrop for the best and longest display of flowering shadbush that I can remember. Every tree was enveloped in a cloud of drooping, ^{long-petalled} white blossoms, and we discovered that we had dozens of this showy, small tree along our trails.

Black Gum Trail, which winds through the mature deciduous forest on Laurel Ridge, was especially beautiful so I devoted one morning — April 10 — to celebrating its display of shadbush. I found many trees of all shapes and sizes with blossoms at all stages of development from just-opened to past their prime and already leafing out.

Those leaves were a bronzed, purplish-brown color, which makes the shadbush on our mountain *Amelanchier laevis*, or smooth shadbush, according to William Carey Grimm's *The Trees of Pennsylvania*. Ranging from Newfoundland to Michigan and Pennsylvania, and south along the Appalachians to northern Georgia, this species grows throughout our state, particularly in the mountains. *Amelanchier canadensis*, the most common shadbush in the com-

monwealth, has pale greenish young leaves covered with long, pale, silky hairs.

Shadbush, so-named because it blooms the same time that shad returns to eastern coastal rivers from the sea, is also called "serviceberry," "sarvis," or "sarvisberry." Some experts say that is because it bloomed when the first circuit preachers were able to reach the backwoods settlements in early spring to hold church services.

But naturalist/writer Donald Culross Peattie ^{in his *A Natural History of Trees of Eastern Central N.A.*} disagrees. He claims that "sarvis" is Elizabethan English for the Latin word "sorbus" given to a fruit that closely resembles that of "sarvisberry."

The fruit of shadbush gives it still other names — "Juneberry" and "shadberry" — for the dark purple fruits that appear in June. They are so relished by fifty species of birds such as cardinals, robins, cedar waxwings, ruffed grouse, and bluebirds, as well as bears, deer, raccoons, foxes, opossums, and other fruit-eating mammals, that I have yet to find one berry ^{on our mountain.}

People who have gathered the fruit claim that it is sweet and resembles the taste of wild blueberries. *A. laevis*, Grimm says, has larger and tastier fruits than *A. canadensis*. Native Americans picked and dried the berries of all four species of shadbush that grow in Pennsylvania. They were also sold in Philadelphia's markets in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Pennsylvania wild food guru, Euell Gibbons, specialized in making shadbush pies, muffins and sauce and canning, freezing and drying the berries for later use.

The best time to locate shadbush is when it blossoms. I also noted its distinctive black-streaked, smooth, light gray bark. This June I hope to at least taste a few shadbush berries. But if, once again, the birds and animals beat me to them, I will not complain. Like Emerson's *Rhodora*, the beauty of shadbush "is its own excuse for being." ❖

But during a late June trip to West Va., I tasted my first *Sorbus*! No doubt it was *A. canadensis* which is not as tasty as *A. laevis*.

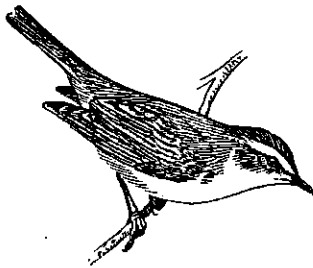


This killdeer nest with four eggs was found by students in the newly created wetlands behind the Frankstown Elementary School on Earth Day 1998.

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