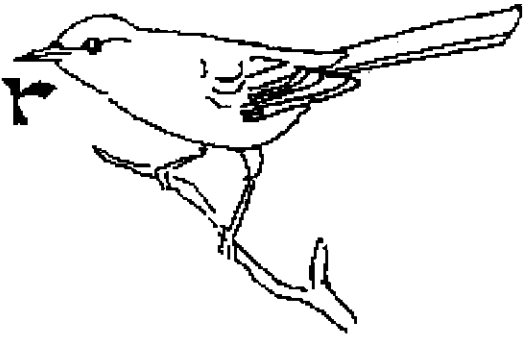


# The Gnatcatcher



## Newsletter of the Juniata Valley Audubon Society

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

Vol. 30, No. 4 – September 1998

### Redefining the State's Environmental Progress

By Voni Strasser, N.E. Pa. Audubon Society

Governor Tom Ridge has unveiled a 21st Century Environmental Commission 78-page blueprint for Pennsylvania's future that calls on all community and state lawmakers to "redefine our definition of progress in the environment." The plan has been hammered out over the last several months. It calls for changes in the way land is developed, encourages business practices that do not squander natural resources, sets goals for eliminating the threat of hazardous wastes, and asks for changes in the way the government regulates the environment and measures its effectiveness.

The commission is recommending strong leadership from the General Assembly in the form of legislation and tax incentives. It also recommends changes in the Municipalities Planning Code and a closer look at cooperation among the various governmental bodies.

The goals of the 40-member commission are to:

1. Promote responsible land use.
2. Encourage conservation and sustainable use of natural resources.
3. Improve human health and environmental quality.
4. Change the way we do business.
5. Develop environmental stewardship.

The commission also calls on Governor Ridge to issue an executive order that

- acknowledges urban sprawl as a real and present problem;
- declares farmland, open spaces, and natural areas as threatened; and
- resolves that our resources need state protection.

Cont'd on page 8

#### September Program

"FLUTTERBY 101." Lycoming Audubon Society President Gerry Zaidler, 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.

7 P.M., Monday, Sept. 21 at the Visitor Center, Canoe Creek State Park, off Rt. 22 east of Hollidaysburg.

#### Field Trip

LIMEROCK ORNAMENTAL GRASS NURSERY, IN STORMS-TOWN, AND 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 LaScalia'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.

Saturday, Sept. 26

#### Next Board Meeting

7 P.M., Tuesday, October 6 at the Visitor Center, Canoe Creek State Park. All members are welcome.

### The Gnatcatcher

is published seven times a year (in February, March, April, May, 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 October 1998 issue is Friday, October 2.

The Juniata Valley Audubon Society (JVAS) is a chapter of the National Audubon Society serving members in Bedford, Blair, Fulton, Huntingdon, and Mifflin Counties.

Program meetings of the JVAS are held in the Visitor Center at Canoe Creek State Park, near Hollidaysburg, on the third Monday of the month in February, March, May, 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.

#### Officers

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

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- Conservation . . . . . Dr. Stan Kotala 946-8840
- Field Trips . . . . . Janet Huber 942-5752
- Publications & Publicity . . . . . Charlie Hoyer 684-7376
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- Director of Ornithology . . . . . Debora Haine 695-8239
- Director at Large . . . . . Dave Kyler 643-6030

## President's Message

Welcome to the new season for the Juniata Valley Audubon Society. Inside this newsletter is the JVAS Programs and Field Trips brochure.

Immediately you may notice that the listing ends with the year 1998. This isn't an error by the Board of Directors, but a new strategy to keep you better informed. A second brochure will be mailed with the February newsletter, listing programs for the remainder of the season in 1999.

Meetings will continue to be held on the third Monday of the designated months in the Visitor Center at Canoe Creek State Park. The time for the business meeting has been moved earlier to 7 P.M. with the program to follow at 7:30 P.M. An excellent array of programs has been planned that will present a variety of natural environmental topics.

Generally, field trips have been scheduled for the Saturday following the monthly meetings. Field trips will give you hands-on experiences with places talked about at monthly meeting presentations.

JVAS meetings are a great way to meet others with similar interests and have some fun outdoors. I hope to see you at September's program and the field trip to Limerock Nursery.

P.S. No field trips have been scheduled during Penn State home football games and are usually over by noon. No excuse, see you soon!

*Terry 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'!

**CONSERVATION**  
**REORDER**

By Dr. Stan Kotala

## JVAS Receives \$250 Grant For Butterfly Garden Expansion

Last year the JVAS Education Committee guided teachers and students of the Penn-Mont Academy elementary school, in Duncansville in the creation of a garden of native perennial wildflowers to attract butterflies.

Building on the success of this project, the committee this year helped the students to expand the garden by converting another 400 square feet of mowed lawn into butterfly habitat. It was funded by a Wild Action Grant for which JVAS Education Chair Dr. Alice Kotala had applied this spring.

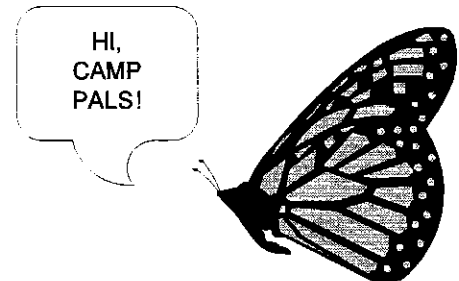
The garden now includes New England aster, phlox, bee balm, Oswego tea, cardinal flower, coreopsis, orange coneflower, purple coneflower, blazing star, and butterfly weed. ❖

## 1998 Summer Nature Camp

The second JVAS summer nature camp at Penn-Mont Academy was a three-week adventure for elementary-aged children focusing on herps, mammals of Pennsylvania, and insects. The activities featured guest speakers, live specimens, field trips, and projects.

For more information about Monarch Watch, attend the butterfly program to be given by Lycoming Audubon Society President Gerry Zeidler at the September 21 meeting of the JVAS. ❖

— Dr. Alice Kotala



Fifteen of the twenty enthusiastic participants at the '98 JVAS Summer Nature Camp are about to release a monarch butterfly after a discussion about Monarch Watch.



Mike and Laura Jackson, JVAS members, share their live reptile specimens with young herp enthusiasts.



Gerry Zeidler, president of the Lycoming Audubon Society and a former chapter president of the North American Butterfly Association, shares his enthusiasm for butterflies.

## Scenes from '98 JVAS Summer Nature Camp At Penn-Mont Academy

Photos and text by Dr. Alice Kotala

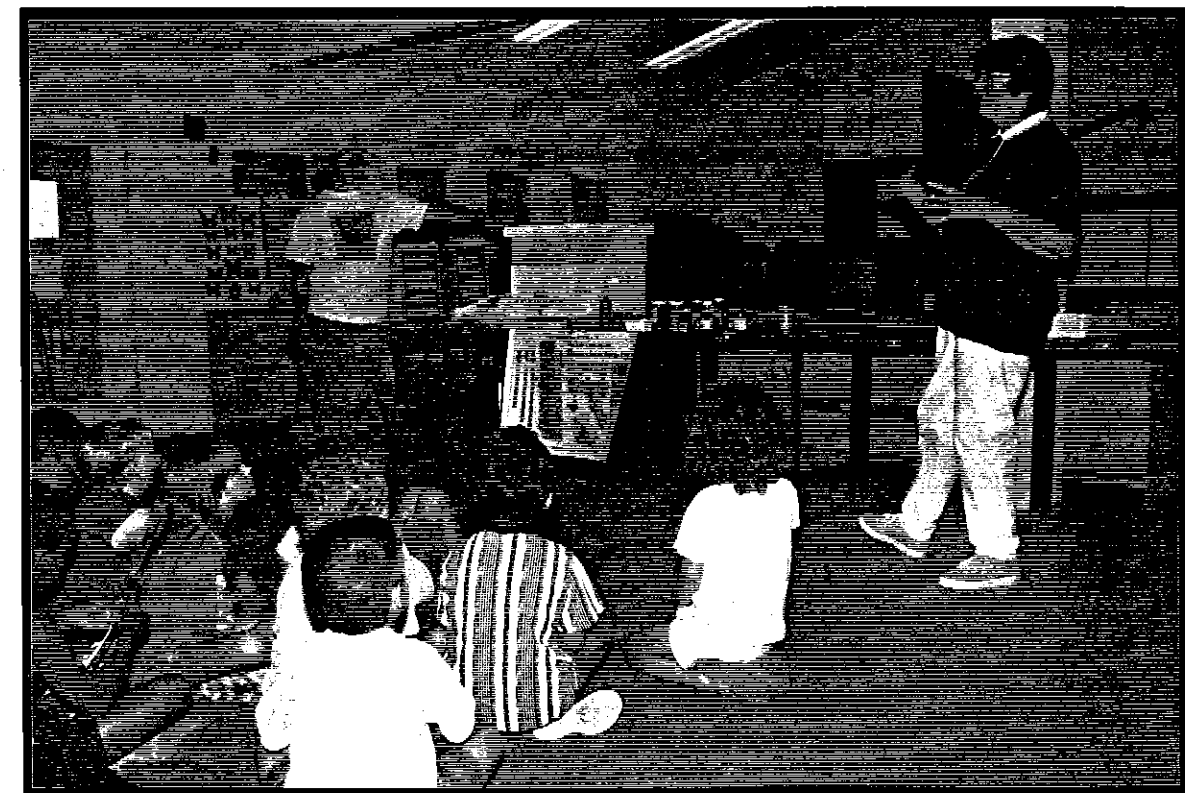


Don Martin, information and education specialist with the Pa. Game Commission, guides students through an animal-tracking exercise during Mammals Week.

*Not pictured:* April Claus, of the Pennsylvania Herpetological Atlas Project, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, who presented live herp specimens to an excited crowd; Jody Wallace, JVAS member, who lent numerous relevant artifacts for display, conducted ecology games with the children, and shared her invaluable teaching talent during Herps and Mammals Weeks; and Kerry Estright-Pruznak, Canoe Creek State Park naturalist, who conducted outdoor expeditions on herps and insects.



Dr. Stan Kotala, JVAS Conservation Chair, assists camp participants in sampling macroinvertebrates along Maryann's Creek, in Canoe Creek State Park during Stream Class.



Master beekeeper Joseph Bayer and his wife Norma, of Bald Eagle, introduce honey bees and beekeeping during Insects Week.

### Allegheny County Man Charged In Black Market Reptile Sting

An Allegheny County man has been charged with the illegal trafficking of reptiles and amphibians, including the bootlegging of threatened and endangered species. John P. Tokosh, 36, of McKeesport was charged with twenty-one counts related to the illegal possession and trade of various turtles and snakes. He faces fines of up to \$65,320 and/or up to four years in jail.

Tokosh was arrested June 28 in Breezewood, Bedford County, after purchasing bog turtles — a Pennsylvania endangered species. Tokosh made the buy along the Pennsylvania Turnpike while under observation by conservation officers with the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission. One hundred illegally obtained and possessed turtles, snakes, and reptile eggs also were found at Tokosh's residence. Additionally, Tokosh was found to be holding twelve different species — some threatened or endangered — including bog turtles, spotted turtles, wood turtles, stinkpot turtles, Blanding's turtles, smooth- and spiny-shelled turtles, and timber rattlesnakes. Paraphernalia and medications used in the rearing of

reptiles, and records of illegal sales also were recovered.

Besides state charges, Tokosh possibly is facing additional federal charges from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. ❖

— From July 17 *Update*, newsletter of the DEP

### Mid-Atlantic Regional Office Closed

Now that more than fifteen state Audubon offices, including Pennsylvania's are open, the Mid-Atlantic Regional Office, along with the other two regional offices, are now closed.

The National Audubon Society is excited about being able to serve its cause and members better through the new state offices. Please contact Executive Director Cindy Dunn with any Audubon questions or needs.

Cindy Adams Dunn, Executive Director  
Pennsylvania State Office  
National Audubon Society  
1104 Fernwood Ave., Suite #300  
Camp Hill, PA 17011  
Tel. (717) 763-4985

### Spring/Summer JVAS Speakers' Bureau Activities

March 17	Dr. Alice Kotala and Jody Wallace — "Bluebirds"	At Talus Rock Girl Scout Troop #1215
March 24	Dave Kyler — "Bluebirds"	At Alexandria Garden Club
Apr. 7	Gene Zielinski — "Bluebirds"	At Restek Co., Bellefonte
Apr. 30	Dave Kyler — "Spring Warblers"	At Bedford County Bird Club
May 11	Jody Wallace — "Frogs and Toads"	At Lincoln Elementary School
May 18	Mark Shields — "Birds of Prey"	At Lincoln Elementary School
May 20	Dr. Stan Kotala — "Stream Class"	At Frankstown Elementary School
May 30	Dr. Stan Kotala — "Stream Class"	At Talus Rock Girl Scouts, Camp Conshawtawba
July 6	Dr. Alice Kotala — "Herp Introduction"	} At JVAS Summer Camp, Penn-Mont
July 6	Mike and Laura Jackson — live herp specimens	
July 7	Jody Wallace — "Frogs and Toads," ecology games	
July 13	Dr. Alice Kotala — "Mammals of Pa. Intro"	
July 16	Jody Wallace — "Mammals' Skulls," ecology games	
July 20	Dr. Alice Kotala — "Insects Intro"	
July 21	Drs. Stan and Alice Kotala — "Stream Class"	
July 22	Dr. Alice Kotala — "Butterfly Intro"	

## Return of the Carolina Wren

January 30, 1998 — a red letter day! Gray and windy with occasional showers of snow. As I walk along Ten Springs Trail I hear (could it be?) the song of a Carolina wren. I pish, and up from the underbrush of Clearcut Hollow two Carolina wrens emerge. After five years, Carolina wrens have returned to the mountain.

They disappeared during intense cold and heavy snows on February 19, 1993 after finding their way into our basement through mouse tunnels. One even spent the bitter, four-degrees-below-zero night of February 18 perched on a hanging pot in our kitchen. The following day I released the bird. She was happily greeted with a burst of song by her mate who had spent the night outside. That was the last I saw or heard of them. Since then I have missed what I consider to be the most personable of all the songbirds.

The returnees were a mile down the mountain from our home so I did not expect them back any time soon. But by March 1 they were singing in Dogwood Hollow, an advance of several hundred feet. For the rest of the spring, though, I heard them only in Clearcut Hollow, a brushy, wet place overwhelmed by sapling striped maples and black locusts, so I assumed they were raising a family in the vicinity.

Then on June 8, a Carolina wren once again sang in Clearcut Hollow. But, as I proceeded on Ten Springs Trail into the uncut forest and wound my way down to our road, a whole family scolded and sang — a set of fledglings foraging with their parents still a mile from our home.

Unlike most wren species, Carolina wrens are monogamous and the males are as busy taking care of the young as the females. They can have as many as three broods in a season, but here in Pennsylvania, in the northern part of their range, two broods are probably the limit. They like a wide range of habitats, from brushy clear-cuts (our Dogwood and Clearcut Hollows) to hemlock-and-rhododendron-choked ravines (our uncut forest near

the stream).

Only males sing the joyful “tea-kettle” song, which they have nearly perfected by the age of forty days when they disperse from their parents’ territory in search of their own turf. There they sing all year long, even in the teeth of blizzards, as I had discovered, defending the territory they occupy throughout the year. Researchers claim that their singing is dependent on a good supply of food and that they don’t sing during abnormally cold and snowy weather, but our 1993 male had not read the books. Researchers did discover, however, that one captive male given unlimited food sang nearly 3,000 songs in one day!

Carolina wren fledglings are known to disperse as much as a fifth of a mile, so where did the Carolina wren singing in our yard on June 29 come from? Didn’t he read the books either? Had he dispersed from the singing wren family in the hollow or had he come from somewhere else on the mountain? I found that hard to believe because I cover the area on a network of trails daily and had heard no other Carolina wrens.

By July there even seemed to be more than one singing. Around our house Carolina wrens chortled from dawn until dusk. But by August we had clearly identified one male who sings in the vicinity of our front porch at dusk just before retiring for the night in an abandoned phoebe nest built on top of the corner column of the veranda. Every morning he is up at first light to greet the day and is now the only singer breaking the dawn silence.

My husband Bruce, who is as happy about the return of the Carolina wrens as I am, whistles their song and then whistles the opening theme of the first movement of Vivaldi’s Concerto in D, which sounds very much like the Carolina wrens’ song. Yet, unlike our winter wren, which is the same species as Europe’s wren, our Carolina wren is an American original. Vivaldi never heard the song of the Carolina wren. But we are once again privileged and grateful to be hearing its jubilant notes every day. ❖

By Marcia Bonta

... **Redefining ...** *Cont'd from first page*

The commission also wants to eliminate the provision in municipalities' planning codes that require provisions to zone for every conceivable usage.

The commission also would like to see the creation of a program to clean up abandoned industrial sites and mine lands, establish programs that give incentives to revitalize boroughs and cities, adopt a goal of eliminating exposure to know harmful pollutants, and create a system that defines, monitors, and tracks diseases triggered by environmental factors.

If you support these vital goals, it is urged that you contact your state senator or representative for the future of Pennsylvania and its citizenry. ❖

**Forest Service Receives Odd Suggestions**

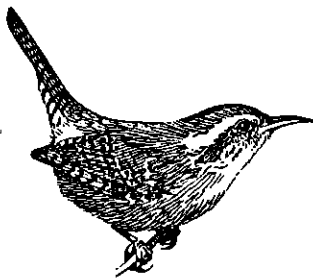
The U.S. Forest Service recently received the following comments from people camping in the beautiful wilderness areas of America.

- Please avoid building trails that go up hill.
- Please spray the area to get rid of bugs and spiders.
- Chair lifts are needed so that we can get to the great views without having to hike to them.
- A McDonald's would be nice at the trail heads.
- There are too many rocks in the mountains.
- The coyotes make too much noise. Please eradicate these annoying animals.

— From a *Reader's Digest* article, July 1998

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



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