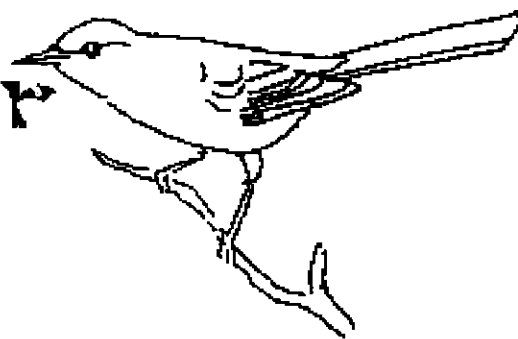


# The Gnatcatcher



## Newsletter of the Juniata Valley Audubon Society

P.O. Box 71, Tyrone, Pennsylvania 16686

Vol. 31, No. 2 — April 1999

### Songbird Studies

#### Raystown data might shed light on why populations are shrinking

The sun had yet to peek over the Huntingdon County ridge, but biologist Chuck Yohn was carefully extracting a small songbird from a mist net as students and volunteers looked on. The bird was really tangled, and Yohn needed all ten fingers, a knitting needle, and a third hand from a student to get this first bird of the morning free.

Ever the teacher, Yohn used the opportunity to explain the finer points of untangling a bird from a mist net. First the feet, one wing, then the other, and in a few minutes the bird was free. "Free," that is, to be placed in a cloth bag that was clipped with a numbered clothes pin and carried down the hill to Juniata College's Raystown Field Station for processing.

While most of the birds took the netting and careful handling calmly, a feisty chickadee kept picking at exposed fingers the entire time it was being untangled. After watching the chickadee, I was a little worried when my turn came to untangle a bird — especially when I rounded the corner and saw that the bird in net No. 5 was a blue jay, the largest bird that we captured that morning.

Looking at the sharp beak and knowing how raucous a blue jay can be, I envisioned bloody fingers — mine! Much to my surprise, the jay was the calmest bird we handled, and I easily had him free from the net and into a bag in seconds. Beginner's luck!

Cont'd on page 3

#### JVAS Annual Spring Banquet

"PENNSYLVANIA ELK," 6:30 P.M., Monday, April 19 (social at 6 o'clock), Trinity United Methodist Church, 533 Main St., Bellwood. \$12 per person. Phone Marge Hoyer at 684-7376 for ticket information.

Merlin Benner, wildlife biologist for the DCNR's Bureau of Forestry, will present a slide program on the status, habitat, and expansion of the elk herd in Pennsylvania.

*Directions to Trinity United Methodist Church: At the Bellwood Exit of I-99, travel toward Bellwood. Follow Rt. 865 North (watch for turns) until the first stop sign. Church is on your left at the corner. Park in rear. Enter through back door.*

#### JVAS Field Trips

AMPHIBIAN WORKSHOP, Sunday, April 25, 2-5 P.M.

Dr. Stan Kotala (tel. 946-8840) will give an amphibian workshop in the Visitor Center at Canoe Creek State Park, followed by a visit to Mary Ann's Creek to search for various species.

Dr. Kotala is Western Ridge and Valley Regional Coordinator for the ongoing Pennsylvania Herpetological Atlas project.

PRESQUE ISLE AND LAKE ERIE, May 14-16

Janet Huber (tel. 942-5752) will guide a weekend trip to Presque Isle to observe the spring migration.

*Depart Altoona Friday afternoon; return Sunday evening. Two nights' accommodation in Erie, with birding stops at Presque Isle, Asbury Woods, and Conneaut Lake. Double occupancy \$80 per person; single occupancy \$140 per person. Cost includes hotel, tax, and breakfast. Car pool cost additional.*

REPTILE WORKSHOP, Sunday, May 16, 2-5 P.M.

Dr. Stan Kotala (tel. 946-8840) will give a reptile workshop in the Visitor Center at Canoe Creek State Park.

## The Gnatcatcher

is published eight times a year (in February, March, April, May, June, September, October, and November) by the

Juniata Valley Audubon Society  
Charlie Hoyer, Editor  
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Tyrone, PA 16686-0071

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 o'clock.) The public is invited to attend.

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## President's Message

In February, the Pennsylvania Department of Natural Resources (DCNR) conducted its first annual department-wide managers conference. This was an historic occasion because it was the first time ever the entire department of the Commonwealth responsible for managing its natural resources and recreation met as one.

The major emphasis of the conference was Pennsylvania's ecological regions. An ecological region is an area with similar geology and topography that supports similar flora and fauna. Pennsylvania is a very diverse land mass that has resulted from upheavals and erosion by natural forces.

Eighteen ecological regions have been identified in the Commonwealth: from the coastal plain of Philadelphia to the central lowlands at Erie, and from the glaciated plateaus in the Poconos to the low plateaus west of the Allegheny Mountains. All of the land in the Juniata Valley Audubon Society area is in the ridge and valley ecological region.

The geology of the land determines the soil type, water availability, habitat diversity, and the land's ability to support development. Think about it, this is the reason that cities have grown where they are.

The DCNR has pledged to manage the Commonwealth's natural resources by ecological regions. No longer will the DCNR concentrate on managing its holdings, but evaluate the entire region affecting its holdings. The results of this new look will be planning, zoning, and cooperation among governing agencies. This must occur in order to leave a diverse and healthy environment for the next generation. There will be plenty of opportunities to get involved and apply your expertise.

*Terry Wentz*



### ... Songbird Studies *(cont'd from first page)*

This spring will mark the fourth year Yohn and the college have participated in the Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship (MAPS) program. MAPS was started in California by the Institute for Bird Populations in 1989. It is a cooperative effort among public agencies, private organizations, and the bird-banders of North America to provide critical, long-term data on populations, survivorship, and breeding success of many land-bird species.

Long-established bird surveys that are conducted each year, such as the Audubon Christmas Bird Count, have shown a steady decline in a number of forest-dwelling species. Kenneth Burton, coordinator of the national MAPS effort, explained, "Other survey programs do a good job of monitoring population trends, but they don't address what forces are driving these trends." By trapping birds in the same location for five or more consecutive years, MAPS data should help biologists to figure out why some species are increasing while many others are declining.

Meanwhile, back at the field station, volunteers were bringing in birds collected from the ten 12-meter-long mist nets. The little, numbered bags were hung up in the shade of a screened-in porch, and Yohn, the "bird untangler," was now busy directing the processing.

Birds are first identified by using a key; then they are aged and sexed by plumage coloration, skull characteristics, measuring the wings, checking primary-feather wear, and looking for a brood patch.

This information, along with their health condition, weight, date and time of capture, and leg band number is recorded on a special MAPS form. If the bird is newly captured, a new U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service numbered aluminum band is carefully attached to its leg.

The keys that were used allowed us to identify the first catch of the morning as a worm-eating warbler — a small olive-colored bird with a striped head. While I can tell a cardinal from a blue jay,

the worm-eating warbler was a new species for me. When it comes to identification of the less familiar species, there's a lot of truth to the saying: "A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush!"

I must add here that Yohn is a master birder and doesn't usually need an identification key. Not only can he identify a "bird in the hand," but he knows the silhouettes, calls, and habits of almost all of Pennsylvania's birds. Since he was "teaching," however, we "students" needed to look it up.

That morning we processed quite a number of birds. Aside from the warbler, chickadee, and blue jay, the day's netting included a cardinal, several juncos, a wood thrush, a common yellowthroat, assorted sparrows, a catbird, and a number of indigo buntings. A few more pieces of data were added to the declining bird puzzle.

From its small beginnings with seventeen sites ten years ago, MAPS has grown into a major effort with more than 400 monitoring stations across the U.S. and Canada. That should certainly be considered success for an organization that began with a goal of establishing 260 monitoring sites. Unfortunately, most of this growth has occurred during the past three years, so enough data to spot trends is not yet available. Research such as this takes time. "We are just entering the phase when the data should begin to reveal some trends," Burton said.

With almost all of the long-standing bird surveys indicating drastic population declines for eastern forest-dwelling species such as scarlet tanagers, warblers and vireos, the birding community is hoping for answers. The possible answers are: habitat destruction, pesticide use in Central and South America, forest fragmentation, and nest parasitism — to name a few.

One thing is for certain — every bird captured, processed, and recorded by Yohn and others brings the MAPS staff closer to identifying problems and possible solutions to the downward trend of many of Pennsylvania's colorful songbirds. ❖

— Mark Hale  
*Pennsylvania Outdoor Times*  
February 1999

## President Issues Green Agenda

### Plan calls for full appropriation of Conservation Fund

In his "Lands Legacy" initiative, President Clinton has requested the largest-ever one-year conservation investment from Congress — a \$1 billion proposal to acquire threatened lands for public use using the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). The proposal also would strengthen vigilance over marine ecosystems, preserve local green spaces throughout communities, and enhance protection at seventeen national parks and monuments with permanent wilderness designations.

Financed by offshore oil and gas leases, the LWCF was conceived as a way to use the depletion of one natural resource to pay for the protection of another. Decades have passed since the LWCF was adequately funded by Congress for the purpose of acquiring federal lands and providing state grants for outdoor recreation. By Fiscal Year 2001, the administration hopes to make the LWCF a permanent, fixed amount, not subject to yearly appropriations from Congress.

Clinton's Lands Legacy initiative expands available funding for federal land acquisitions by an additional \$442 million. Priorities on the administration's spending list include protecting acreage in the Mojave Desert and around Joshua Tree National Park and preserving forests and refuges in New England. Lands critical for restoration of the Florida Everglades ecosystem and historic parcels around the Gettysburg and Antietam battlefields also are top concerns. Clinton requested that Congress grant permanent wilderness protection to 5.3 million acres within the backcountry areas of seventeen national parks and monuments. Wilderness designation, which prohibits all motorized recreation, road building, and resource extraction, offers the highest level of protection available for park resources.

Many of the areas Clinton highlighted, such as Yellowstone, Great Smoky Mountains, and Grand

Teton national parks, were authorized for wilderness expansion more than twenty years ago under presidents Nixon, Ford, and Carter. Because of competing political interests over the years, however, these areas have been waiting on congressional approval. The NPCA speculates that a package bill could be introduced by a member of Congress on behalf of the administration that would address wilderness designation for the areas Clinton specified.

Having developed its own organizational "Marine Resources Initiative," the NPCA supports Clinton's vow to improve the health of the nation's oceans and coasts. His plan requests \$29 million to expand and safeguard national marine sanctuaries, \$90 million to states to restore and protect costal habitat, and \$45 million to rejuvenate coral reefs, fisheries, and ocean habitats.

Clinton also addressed the disappearance of our backyard open spaces and cultural icons beneath the expansion of our modern day communities. In the last four years, states have received nothing from the LWCF. "Lands Legacy" provides \$588 million to state and local governments, private land trusts, and nonprofit groups for:

- land grants to establish greenways, wetlands, and wildlife habitat in local communities;
- grants for open space planning and "smart growth" development;
- easements for threatened farmlands and forests;
- grants to revitalize urban parks, a Park Service program unfunded since 1995; and
- funds for habitat conservation to protect endangered species. ❖

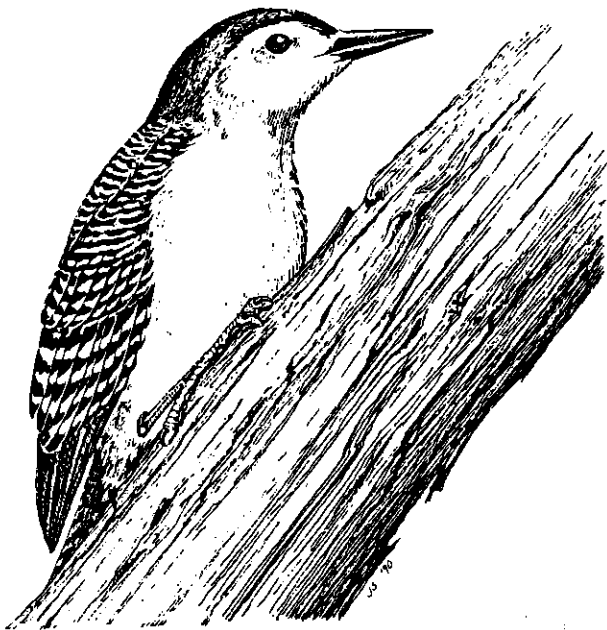
— From *National Parks*, March/April 1999

## INITIATIVE

## Yard Birds

By Shirley Wagoner

Most of you probably feed birds in your yard; perhaps you have participated in Project Feeder-Watch, gathering data for the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Maybe you have kept your own yard list, too. I have been doing all three ever since we moved into our present home in 1994. After nearly five years in this location, I decided it was time to go over my records and see what can be learned from them.



First, while I keep track of all the species that appear in my yard and the dates when each one has been present, I had not yet compiled them into a complete list. My record sheets list all the birds I might expect, plus a few blanks for accidentals. Now, putting them altogether, I find I have observed, both in my yard and from it, a total of sixty-nine different species over the years. (I count all the birds I see flying over — even a great blue heron that never would stop in my yard — plus any I can hear and recognize from a distance, such as Canada geese, that certainly would not be attracted to my tiny pond.) In any given year, I am likely to see or hear perhaps only seventy percent of the total

number of species on my list, but totaling all my observations over a five-year period yields quite an interesting bird list!

Some of these birds are residents, some are regular seasonal visitors, some are quite accidental. It is interesting to note that, while my bird tapes list many local residents as associated mainly with southern forests, I also see species listed as associated with northern forests. For example, “southern” birds that I see regularly are red-bellied woodpeckers, tufted titmice, and pileated woodpeckers (the titmice and red-bellied woodpeckers are frequent visitors). The “northern” species that are present are mainly winter visitors, except for the black-capped chickadees that may stay through the summer. When the dark-eyed juncos and the white-throated sparrows leave, in March or April, we know that spring has arrived.

From my records, I count fifteen species that are clearly resident all year though they may not visit my yard on a daily basis: mourning dove, downy woodpecker, hairy woodpecker, blue jay, American crow, black-capped chickadee, tufted titmouse, white-breasted nuthatch, Carolina wren, northern cardinal, song sparrow, house finch, American goldfinch, house sparrow, and red-bellied woodpecker.

This year, a red-tailed hawk stayed around during the winter. Last year, a flock of pine siskins spent the winter here; this year I have not seen a single one. Three winters were marked by visits from an elegant brown creeper on the trunk of my feeder tree just outside my window. A pileated woodpecker has visited occasionally and sometimes a red-breasted nuthatch or a flock of evening grosbeaks. Not this year, however. One March day a common redpoll surprised me just outside my back door. In other years, a fox sparrow or a tree sparrow paused on their journey north. As the winter ebbs, an occasional bluebird stops by, probably seeking possible nest sites. My neighbors and I have

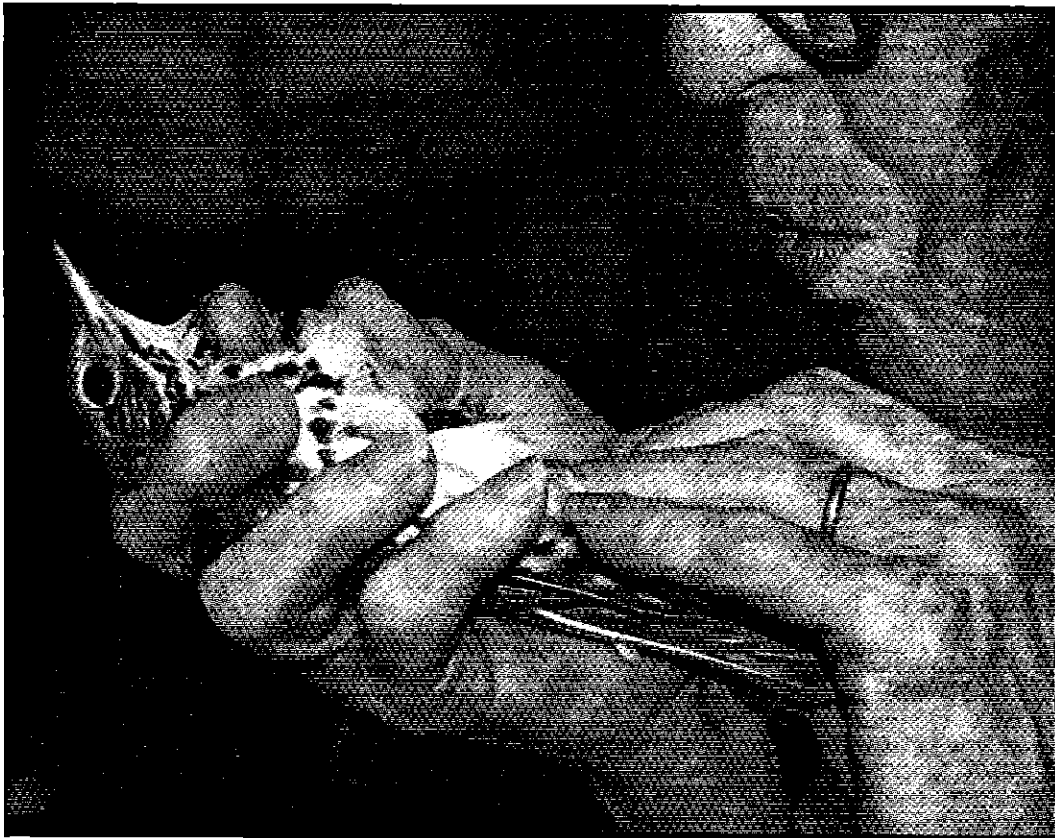
several boxes up, but the wrens and sparrows too often dominate them.

In the spring and summer I often see or hear the following summer residents: fish crow, house wren, American robin, gray catbird, chipping sparrow, common grackle, and brown-headed cowbird. I notice that the cowbird visits only at intervals, presumably to check out possible nests to parasitize. Sometimes a wood thrush or two seems to stake out a territory, but I have been unable to determine if they actually nest in the area.

Some of the accidentals that have appeared only once or twice in my yard include a flock of indigo buntings one year and a flock of rose-breasted grosbeaks another year. It is quite a thrill to see six or eight of these brightly colored birds only a few feet from my windows. Orioles and towhees visit

regularly in the spring. I occasionally see warblers, too: Blackburnian, bay-breasted, worm-eating, and yellow-rumped warblers all have paused here long enough to be identified. Flycatchers — great crested and eastern wood-pewee — also pause here occasionally. Raptors may pass over or stop by nearly at any time of year: black and turkey vultures (in the summer) or an occasional hawk or owl. A Cooper's hawk checks the guests at my feeders every month or two (at least).

This account does not exhaust my sightings, or does my yard list rival lists developed for Shaver's Creek Environmental Center or other such lists, but it has been a lot of fun to add to my list each year as a new bird appears and to try to figure out what I need to add to my yard so as to attract still more species. ❖



Shirley Wagoner checks a brood patch on a wood thrush that was netted up the hill from Juniata College's Raystown Bird-banding Field Station. (See front-page article.)

## Little Juniata Continues Comeback

By Mark Nale

Latest macro-invertebrate samples from the Little Juniata River indicate that this important trout fishery continues to recover. The Little 'J,' which flows from Altoona through Tyrone and on into Huntingdon County, is a favorite destination of area trout anglers — or at least it was before it suffered its latest bout with pollution.

Sometime during late 1995 or early 1996, an unknown pollutant wiped out up to ninety-five percent of the aquatic insects in the Little Juniata River between Ironville and Barree. This section of river, famous for its great mayfly hatches, had lost almost its entire mayfly population. The brown trout, which depend on the aquatic insects for about eighty-five percent of their diet, suddenly found little to eat.

Surveys conducted by biologists of the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection and the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission have since determined that the most damaged area extended downstream from the Tyrone Sewage Treatment Plant, near Ironville. In the months following the pollution, blackfly larva, a pollution-tolerant insect, replaced the usually numerous mayfly nymphs and caddis larva.

In response to the lost food base, the PFBC did not stock the Little Juniata with brown trout fingerlings in 1997. Last summer the PFBC resumed fingerling stocking in a portion of the river because more recent DEP biological and chemical sampling indicated cleaner water and a recovering aquatic insect population.

Because of the continued recovery of the river, the fingerling stocking will be extended upstream to Ironville this summer, according to Tom Green, Coldwater Unit Leader for the PFBC.

If any good has come out of this tragedy, it was the formation of the Little Juniata River Association — a new, nonprofit, citizen water-monitoring group that has adopted the river. Spearheaded by QCI chemist John Pascavage and assisted by DEP

biologist Bill Botts, the LJRA has active members from Tyrone, Huntingdon, and other area communities. They are assisted by students from Juniata College and Tyrone Area High School. The association has been monitoring the river for more than a year with equipment supplied by the DEP.

Pascavage noted, "We have a great core of about twenty dedicated members, but our biggest boost has been the recent addition of Juniata College aquatic entomologist Paula Martin." He added, "Martin has trained and assisted our other members and really moved us along with our identification of the aquatic macro-invertebrates."

The LJRA follows the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Rapid Bioassessment Protocol. Two D-net samples are taken at each of the nine monitoring sites from Grazierville to Barree. Samples are sorted and a subsample is taken from each for identification. Six to eight man-hours go into collecting, sorting, and identifying aquatic insects from each sample. The group meets at Tyrone Area High School to conduct its efforts.

Preliminary results from the LJRA's October 1998 survey indicate a continued recovery of the river. In fact, when one compares October 1997 data with that of October 1998, the improvement is dramatic. Pollution-sensitive organisms such as mayflies, caddis flies, and riffle beetles, now make up eighty percent to ninety-six percent of the samples.

While tiny blackfly larva made up as much as ninety-one percent of the October 1997 collection, they constitute less than two percent of the October 1998 samples. The reverse is true of the pollution-sensitive organisms. In 1997 the number of pollution-sensitive insects averaged less than twenty percent. The latest samples show marked recovery at the four survey sites immediately downstream from Ironville.

According to Pascavage, "LJRA data suggest a one-time pollution event and a continued recovery of

the river." He went on to say, "Although the diversity is not yet as great as it was before the pollution, the number of mayfly nymphs and caddis larva are really encouraging."

Another sampling is planned by the LJRA for later this month. Pascavage hopes that it will reflect more of the good news the October samples showed. ❖

## Saving Your Land for the Future

*A donation to a land trust offers tax breaks, too.*

Logging trucks regularly pass Betty Davies' property near the upper Susquehanna River in rural Mehoopany, Pa. And over the years, she has turned down offers to harvest her forty acres of timber. But Davies, who celebrated her 80th birthday in January, wanted some assurance that the "special place" she and her late husband bought in 1959 would remain unspoiled even after she was no longer able to watch over it. "I don't want someone to come in and cut the trees and put up a trailer park," she says. "I've seen it happen right across the creek from me."

And so Davies gave away most of her development rights to the land, ensuring that the woods would be preserved — and minimizing any inheritance tax that could burden her heirs. In December 1997 she donated a conservation easement to the Back Mountain Regional Land Trust, which will supervise the property indefinitely. The easement is a permanent part of the property record, and Davies and any subsequent owners will be bound by its restrictions. No one will have the right to clear-cut the mountain, install hardtop roads, or build more than one house. The Back Mountain land trust promises to be the

*Your property has to be worth saving, say, for its scenic value or for the presence of endangered species or because farmland in the area is being gobbled up by development.*

watchdog, ready to sue future landowners if they violate the restrictions Davies created.

**Who Can Donate.** The 1100 nonprofit land trusts across the country will accept an easement on your land only if it suits their public-policy goals. Your property — whether it's farmland, woodland, or wetland — has to be worth saving, say, for its scenic value or for the presence of endangered species or because farmland is being gobbled up by development.

And trusts usually require that you also donate a cash endowment to cover the cost of policing the easement. Davies donated \$2000 to the Back Mountain trust; larger trusts operating in areas with a higher cost of living would expect at least twice that much. Davies also had to pay for an appraisal and land surveys.

**Tax Breaks.** In return, though, donors qualify for substantial tax breaks. The value of the easement itself (that is, the difference between the land's appraised value with the restrictions in place and its value if it could be developed) is deductible on your federal income-tax return. You can deduct appreciated real estate worth up to thirty percent of your adjusted gross income as a charitable donation each year, and the deductions may be spread out over six years. You also may claim a deduction for the endowment.

There are federal estate-tax breaks, too. Not only is an estate allowed a lower tax valuation on its land because the development rights are tied up, but the estate is entitled to additional tax deductions — based on as much as forty percent of the post-easement land value. These deductions are capped at \$100,000 for the estates of owners who died in 1998, \$200,000 in 1999, and as high as \$500,000 in 2002.

Tax laws passed in 1997 and 1998 now allow executors to donate conservation easements. "The postmortem election is particularly useful in instances in which heirs find themselves with land worth more than the owner ever realized," says Russell Shay, director of public policy for the Land Trust Alliance, an umbrella group for local land trusts.



"This is not uncommon. There are a whole bunch of taxes owed, and without an easement there's no option but to sell the land." State laws, however, may restrict an executor's ability to grant the easement. ❖

— Joan Goldwasser  
*Kiplinger's Personal Finance Magazine*  
March 1999

## Banning Water Bikes

Personal watercraft (PWC) zipping across lakes, their revving engines ruining the morning serenity, will be nothing but a bad memory on some U.S. waters. Many states and communities from Washington to Florida and Maine are cracking down on PWC use. On some waters, they'll be banned outright.

PWC often are blamed for disturbing fish and wildlife habitat, polluting water, and causing conflicts and accidents with other boaters. In Pennsylvania, PWC users comprise seven percent of registered boaters but are involved in fifty percent of accidents, said Dan Tredinnick, Fish & Boat Commission spokesman.

Washington's San Juan County banned PWC use, and the state's Supreme Court recently upheld the right of the county (and other communities) to do so. PWC were also banned in Lake Tahoe, Nevada, as well as in certain ecologically sensitive areas in Florida. The National Park Service will rule on a proposal this year that calls for their ban from more "pristine" parks.

Maine took perhaps the boldest step in curbing PWC use last November when it banned them from 245 lakes. Their disturbance of loon nesting areas and especially noise pollution were the most pervasive reasons for the ban, said Fred Todd of Maine's Land Use Regulatory Commission. Legislation that further limits PWC use on an additional fifty-seven lakes and river sections will be considered this year. ❖

— Seth P. Cassell  
*Field & Stream*, April 1999

## Pa. Herpetological Atlas "Blockbusting" Events

Dr. Stan Kotala, Western Ridge and Valley Regional Coordinator for the Pennsylvania Herpetological Atlas project, has proposed the following "blockbusting events" for survey:

- Sunday-Tuesday, April 18-20 — Cowans Gap State Park (Fulton County). This is an overnight camping event.
- Sunday, May 2 — Hemlocks Natural Area and Big Spring State Park (Perry County).
- Sunday, May 23 — Blue Knob State Park and State Game Lands #26 (Bedford County).
- Sunday, June 6 — Fowler's Hollow State Park (Perry County).
- Sunday, Aug. 29 — Trough Creek State Park (Huntingdon County).
- Sunday, Sept. 5 — Blacklog Valley (Juniata County).

## Reptile and Amphibian Project Director to Join Participants On May 2 Field Trip

Dr. Arthur Hulse, director of the Pennsylvania Herpetological Atlas project and professor of biology at Indiana University of Pennsylvania, will join Atlas volunteers on a field trip to Hemlocks Natural Area, in Perry County.

The purpose of the trip is to inventory the reptiles and amphibians of that portion of Tuscarora State Forest, known for its virgin hemlocks — many of which are several hundred years old.

We'll meet at the sign for Big Spring State Park along Pa. Rt. 274 between Doylesburg and New Germantown at 1 P.M., Sunday, May 2. After a hike through Hemlocks Natural Area, we'll have a potluck dinner at Big Spring State Park. If you have any questions, call Dr. Stan Kotala at 946-8840.

— Dr. Stan Kotala

## TWW Legislation Introduced

Legislation affecting "Teaming With Wildlife" will soon be introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate. The House's Conservation and Reinvestment Act of 1998 (CARA) and the Senate's Reinvestment and Environmental Restoration Act of 1998 (RERA) would provide approximately \$350 million annually to state fish and wildlife agencies for wildlife-based conservation, recreation, and education programs.

Both bills would redirect revenues from offshore oil and gas exploration to the states to fund coastal impact assistance, land-based recreation programs, and wildlife-based conservation efforts. Under these legislative proposals, Pennsylvania would gain approximately \$12 to \$14 million per year for fish and wildlife conservation, recreation, and education programs.

It is expected that these bills will be introduced in early 1999 for a formal vote. Now, the push is on to find bi-partisan co-sponsors of the legislation prior to introduction. You can play a critical role in securing this much-needed funding. If you support this legislation, please let your representatives know and urge them to become co-sponsors. In addition, addresses of key legislators are listed below — letters from their districts are especially important.

At long last, the hard work to get Teaming With Wildlife up and running as a valid legislative effort is paying off! It is due to the letters, Congressional visits, and phone calls generated by the Pennsylvania and national TWW coalitions that this effort has come this far. This could be the most important piece of legislation to affect fish and wildlife management in a generation. We are now in the home stretch and need one final push from the Pennsylvania coalition — the fourth largest in the nation. Please review the background materials and rally support for this conservation initiative — Pennsylvania's best bet in beginning the process of halting species and habitat declines.

### Key Legislator Addresses:

Congressman John Peterson - (814) 238-1776 or (202) 225-5121: House Resources Cmte  
 Congressman William Coyne - (412) 644-2870 or (292) 225-2301: House Ways and Means  
 Congressman Phil English - (814) 456-2038 or (202) 225-5406: House Ways and Means  
 → Send letters c/o U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, DC 20515

Senator Arlen Specter - (202) 224-4254 Address: 530 Hart Building  
 Senator Rick Santorum - (202) 224-6324 Address: 120 Russell Building  
 → Send letters c/o U.S. Senate, Washington, DC 20510

### *The need for this legislation is critical, the timing is urgent:*

- ✓ **More than 500 species, comprising eighty-five of Pennsylvania's fish and wildlife, receive no secure funding for their conservation.** While the recovery of endangered species is supported by the Endangered Species Act, and the management of game species is financed by sportsmen's dollars, the conservation of most fish and wildlife species has fallen through the cracks. Meanwhile, the number of forest- and grassland-dwelling songbirds is declining, the abundance and diversity of butterflies is reduced, amphibians are absent from an alarming number of sites they once occupied, and chubs, sculpins, and darters are disappearing from many of our headwater streams. In some cases, management plans have been developed to halt these declines, but funding is not available to implement the plans.
- ✓ **Fish and wildlife populations may be declining all over the state and we wouldn't know it.** We do not know the population status for most fish and wildlife species because we lack resources to monitor them. We are in a reactive rather than a proactive management situation, in which we wait for a species to become threatened before we take management action. Our Commissions use their limited nongame budgets on highly intensive programs for species most at risk, while others may be slipping quietly away.
- ✓ **People are losing touch with the natural world.** Many Pennsylvanians have little experience with natural processes and even less understanding of their importance. Reestablishing people's personal link with nature is the first step in encouraging a desire to protect wildlife and wildlands. We must do a better job of exposing all Pennsylvanians to the importance and fragility of our wild resources.

- ✓ **There is a large unmet demand for wildlife recreation in Pennsylvania.** There are roughly 4.1 million Pennsylvanians who engage in "nonconsumptive" wildlife recreation, such as wildlife watching, wildlife photography, and bird feeding. Yet our fish and wildlife agencies offer limited recreational or educational programs for these outdoor enthusiasts because of limited funding. The Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission and Game Commission receive the vast majority of their funding from fees paid by hunters and anglers. These agencies have only limited resources available to develop programming for other types of outdoor enthusiasts.
- ✓ **Nonconsumptive fish and wildlife recreation generates approximately \$1.8 billion per year in Pennsylvania and supports more than 24,000 jobs, yet these funds are not reinvested into the long term conservation of our wild resources.** Though billions of dollars have been deposited in the Commonwealth's General Fund as a result of fish and wildlife recreation, none of this money is allocated to the Fish and Boat Commission, Game Commission, or Wild Resource Conservation Fund to support fish and wildlife conservation. These agencies rely upon sportsmen's fees, an income tax checkoff, and the sale of a wildlife license plate to fund their efforts. This funding system is inadequate to address the Commonwealth's pressing conservation needs.

### Sample Letter to Representatives (or Senators)

*Use the following as a guideline but please personalize the letter with your own expressions, ideas, and experiences!*

Date \_\_\_\_\_

The Honorable \_\_\_\_\_  
 House of Representatives (or Senate)  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Bldg.  
 Washington, DC 20515 (use 20510 for senators)

Dear Representative/Senator \_\_\_\_\_:

I am asking for your support and co-sponsorship of the Conservation and Reinvestment Act of 1998 (CARA:H.R.4717) [in Senate: Reinvestment and Environmental Restoration Act (RERA:S.2566)] As your constituent, I also am a conservationist and outdoor recreationist, and the health of Pennsylvania's fish and wildlife is very important to me.

As you may be aware, CARA (or RERA) would invest a portion of the proceeds from offshore oil and gas leases to finance coastal impact assistance, the creation of outdoor recreational opportunities, and the development of fish and wildlife conservation, recreation, and education programs. With this legislation, we have the opportunity to make a long term investment to stabilize declining fish and wildlife populations, to prevent species from becoming endangered, and to nurture a stewardship ethic among our children.

I encourage you to learn more about this important funding initiative, and I urge you to cosponsor this legislation now and support it with your vote when it is formally introduced.

Sincerely,

**Conservation and Reinvestment Act of 1998**  
(S.2566, H.R.4717)

**Background**

Since the mid-1950s 100 percent of rents, royalties, and bonuses paid to the federal government from offshore oil and gas drilling on the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) has gone directly to the Federal Treasury, while revenues generated by onshore oil and gas development is shared equally between the federal government and states where development occurs.

In 1965, Congress enacted the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) to use OCS royalties to, "Preserve irreplaceable lands of natural beauty and unique recreational value." Since its enactment, LWCF monies have been used to provide outstanding recreational opportunities for Pennsylvanians. Many state, county, and local parks, state gamelands, and public fishing access facilities have been established with the use of these monies. In recent years, however, Congress has not authorized any state funding under the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

In 1937, Congress enacted the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act (commonly known as the Pittman-Robertson Act) to restore declining populations of birds and mammals, particularly game species. In 1950, Congress enacted the Federal Aid in Sportfish Restoration Act (commonly known as Dingell-Johnson). Nationally, these two programs provide more than \$400 million annually for state fish and wildlife programs. In 1973, Congress enacted the Endangered Species Act to halt the declines and restore populations of species approaching extinction. While these have been largely successful, more than 75 percent of the nation's fish and wildlife species do not receive management funds under these acts. Often referred to as "nongame" or "nonharvested" fish and wildlife, many of these species are declining and are at risk of becoming threatened or endangered.

**Purpose of the Conservation and Reinvestment Act of 1998**

To reinvest a portion of the nonrenewable resource development revenues into renewable resources while providing financial impact assistance to coastal states, territories, and local entities impacted by OCS-related activities. This Act would secure nearly fifty percent of offshore oil and gas revenues for state and local governments to (1) enhance and protect their coastlines and wetlands, (2) reinstitute state funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund, and (3) establish programs promoting wildlife conservation and the prevention of species from becoming threatened or endangered. Pennsylvania would receive an estimated \$31 million per year under this legislation.

**Distribution of Funds**

The Conservation and Reinvestment Act of 1998 is divided into three Titles, with distinct purposes and requirements. Bonuses, rents and royalties from all leases beyond State waters are proposed to be distributed in the following manner:

50% to the Federal Treasury for deficit reduction and other purposes.	<i>Est. Pa. Share</i>
27% to impacted coastal states, counties, boroughs, and parishes ( <i>Title 1</i> ).	\$6 million/yr.
13% to land-based conservation and recreation programs ( <i>Title 2</i> ).	\$9 million/yr.
10% to a wildlife-based conservation and education program ( <i>Title 3</i> ).	\$16 million/yr.

**Conservation and Reinvestment Act of 1998**  
(S.2566, H.R.4717)

**Title Purposes and Requirements**

All three titles are proposed to receive permanent funding, rather than annual appropriations, thus ensuring a dedicated and consistent source of funding for these programs. Pennsylvania would gain an estimated \$31 million per year: \$6 million for impact assistance, \$9 million for land-based recreation programs, and \$16 million for impact assistance, \$9 million for land-based recreation programs, and \$16 million for wildlife-based conservation and recreation programs as specified below.

**Title 1 — Impact Assistance:** \$1 billion nationally; \$6 million annually for PA. Twenty-seven percent of annual OCS revenue would go to coastal states and local communities for impact assistance associated with oil and gas development off their shores (applicable to thirty-five coastal states including Great Lakes states). A few examples

of OCS-associated impacts eligible for impact assistance funds include air quality, water quality, fish and wildlife, and wetlands. There are no state match requirements to receive funds under this title. DEP primary recipient.

**Title 2 — Land-based Recreation:** \$520 million nationally; \$9 million annually for Pennsylvania. Thirteen percent of annual OCS revenue would be used to fund the state-side of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) over and above LWCF's current authorization and the Urban Park and Recreation Recovery Program (UPARR). This funding would be available to all fifty states. The thirteen percent would be distributed as follows: eighty percent to state-side LWCF, ten percent to UPARR, and ten percent to priority state and local recreation and conservation projects determined by the Secretary of the Interior. There is a 50/50 match requirement to receive funds under this title. DCNR primary recipient.

**Title 3 — Wildlife-Based Conservation:** \$400 million nationally; \$16 million annually for Pennsylvania. Ten percent of annual OCS revenue would be used to fund state-level wildlife conservation and related recreation and education projects through a new subaccount of the Pittman-Robertson Act. This would essentially meet the goals of Teaming With Wildlife and would be available to all fifty states. There is a 90/10 match requirement for the first five years to receive funds under this title, which then increases to a 75/25 requirement. PFBC/PGC primary recipient.

## Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania Announces First Conference

The Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania will hold its First Annual Bluebird Conference at Messiah Village in Mechanicsburg, Pa. on Saturday, May 1, 1999. The all-day conference is open to the public and will feature presentations on bluebirds by Doug LeVasseur and Kevin Berner, who are nationally respected authorities on bluebirds and bluebird conservation efforts.

The Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania is an affiliate of the respected and well-established North American Bluebird Society and works closely with the Appalachian Audubon Society. The BSP was formed to encourage education about and protection of bluebirds and other cavity-nesting species, creation and maintenance of bluebird trails, and sharing of information on bluebird and other conservation topics. The BSP began with fourteen members from the greater Harrisburg area in June 1998 and has already grown to more than 300 members statewide. More than 1000 bluebirds were reported to have fledged from nest boxes set up and monitored by BSP members last year.

"The conference is intended to aid and continue BSP efforts by providing the public with an opportunity to learn more about the plight of the bluebird and the many simple and rewarding ways anyone can help the bluebirds," stated Diane Barbin, co-founder of the organization.

Doug LeVasseur, president of the Ohio Bluebird Society and vice-president of the North American

Bluebird Society will talk on "The Joys of Bluebirding" and basic bluebirding skills, and show a video of a bluebird who takes mealworms from his kitchen table. Kevin Berner, wildlife biologist at State University of New York and director of research for NABS, will discuss his many years of nest box and predator-control research.

Also addressing the conference will be Ben Leese, research committee chairman for the BSP, on research on his own bluebird trail and on barn owls. Terry Neumyer, program committee chairman for the Appalachian Audubon Society and worldwide birder, will talk on his experiences with backyard birds.

A Birder's Roundtable, open discussion, question-and-answer sessions, and a benefit auction also will be included in the conference. An optional spring migration bird walk will be offered at Wildwood Wilderness Center, Harrisburg, at the close of the conference.

Registration for the conference will open at 9 A.M. Sessions will run from 10 A.M. to 4:30 P.M. Admission is \$5 per person. Lunch is available for another \$5. Send check with reservations to the Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania, P.O. Box 267, Enola, PA 17025-0267 no later than April 15. For additional information contact the BSP at the above address or phone Diane Barbin at (717) 651-0580 or Kathy Clark at (717) 938-4089, or send an e-mail message to Kathy at <bsporg@aol.com>. ❖

## Lower Trail Walks and Bike Rides Return for 1999

This spring and summer, fellow Auduboner Steve Stroman will be coordinating another series of guided walks and bike rides on the Lower Trail. The series will highlight the rich natural and industrial history of the Lower Trail and its environs. Previous guided walks have included birds, trees, the Pennsylvania Canal, the Juniata River, Mount Etna, and the industrial heritage of the Lower Trail. Steve also will be offering guided bike rides of the entire Lower Trail beginning in May. These rides will include approximately ten interpretive stops.

If you have any suggestions for topics or walk leaders for the series, don't hesitate to contact Steve at 643-1444 (2200 Cassady Avenue, Huntingdon, PA 16652) or e-mail at <sstroman@pahouse.net>.

**On Sunday, Apr. 25, Steve will lead a walk on the Lower Trail** after the Rails-to-Trails spring picnic at Mount Etna. The walk will begin after the raffle drawing at about 1 P.M. This will be a very informal walk during which Steve will discuss the Pennsylvania Canal and railroad history in addition to identifying wildflowers. Besides the fellowship with other trail enthusiasts, many of us also will be inspired with a good excuse for exercise after partaking in all of the goodies at the picnic. ❖

## New Method of Rebate to JVAS For New BWD Subscriptions

For many years, *Bird Watcher's Digest* has had a program whereby one-half the price of every *new* subscription to *BWD* sold through the JVAS was rebated to the Chapter; however, the procedure has been time- and energy-consuming.

Now, there's a new, simple, hassle-free method for JVAS members to benefit the Chapter, and the publisher has extended the rebate offer to include one-half the subscription price of all three of its publications. Here's how it works: Pick up the phone, dial (toll-free) 1-800-879-2473. Take or give a subscription to *Bird Watcher's Digest*, the *BWD*

*Skimmer* newsletter, or *Backyard Bird News* and tell them the name of our Chapter. They'll take it from there. All they ask is that the subscription be *new* and that payment be made by credit card at the time you place your order. ❖

## Winter Bird Report in a Nutshell

It was unnaturally mild over most of our region, with one blast of cold in January but little snow. With no snow, birds were not forced to congregate at bird feeders. There were no winter finches this year, but juncos were here in great numbers. Robins, waxwings, and fox sparrows stayed north, partly because of the warm weather and partly because of the good berry and grape crops. ❖

### IMPORTANT ELECTION UNDERWAY IN MID-ATLANTIC ELECTION REGION

Nominations have been received for the Mid-Atlantic chapter-selected candidate to the National Audubon Society Board of Directions. The nominee is:

**Dave Pardoe, of Columbia, Maryland**

Members are encouraged to meet the candidate and review his biography, which has been sent to the Chapter President, Vice-president, and Newsletter Editor.

Chapters from District of Columbia, Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and West Virginia may cast their ballot(s) at any time until  
June 30, 1999

**Contact the JVAS to determine the time  
and place of the election.**

## Feeder Birds

Project FeederWatch is over for another year. But, once again, feeder-watching had its rewards. Although it was not a finch-invasion year, we did have some interesting feeder observations. It was, for instance, the best year for American tree sparrows that we have had since the seventies — with a high of twenty in mid-January. Mourning doves, which up to this year came in singly and intermittently, built up to eleven by February. There were as many as twenty American goldfinches and forty juncos. Not only were juncos the most numerous of all our species, they remain the most numerous feeder species in the entire country.

A pair of Carolina wrens lasted into the bitter cold and ice of mid-January before disappearing. House finches increased to twenty-six and then quickly collapsed to a handful by February. We also had a couple wintering song sparrows, a white-throated sparrow, a pair of red-bellied woodpeckers, another of downies, and the usual titmice, chickadees, white-breasted nuthatches, and cardinals.

On a misty January 21 two female purple finches paid us a brief visit. During the depths of the winter we had several visitations from an immature male sharp-shinned hawk, but he never caught a bird while we watched. He seemed to be thinner and

more forlorn as the weeks passed and finally we didn't see him again.

In the middle of the March 6 snowstorm, a flock of sixty male and ten female red-winged blackbirds arrived at the feeders, calling, singing, and eating the mixed seed and oil sunflower seed that are the only foods I provide for my feeder birds. And, on the last day of March, the first field sparrow arrived just in time to add to my last Project FeederWatch report.

But our best bird sighting occurred at night on January 10 when our son Mark spotted a "gray-phase" eastern screech owl sitting on the roof of our wooden bird feeder that hangs from the back porch latticework. No doubt it was waiting to catch the mice that eat the seed on the ground below the porch steps. It remained perched there for a minute or more, lit by the back porch light as all of us — Mark, his wife Luz, our son Dave, my

husband Bruce, me, and our little granddaughter Eva — watched from the porch door window three feet away.

With the usual self-possession of a screech owl, it stared back at us before it flew off. Eva was absolutely delighted and couldn't stop talking about and acting out the appearance and flight of the marvelous little owl. ❖

By Marcia Bonta



***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.***

## State Parks to Offer New Watershed Education Program

The Pa. DCNR's Bureau of State Parks is piloting a comprehensive Watershed Education program with students of grades 6-12 across the state. Forty-five of the bureau's environmental specialists are now trained in the new program, which will be offered at thirty-two environmental education centers and state parks.

WE is an watershed-based, interdisciplinary program for students, promoting classroom and field research, hands-on ecological investigations, networking partnerships, stewardship, and community service in an effort to increase environmental literacy. WE takes a more comprehensive approach to learning about a natural resource than the bureau's

former Water Quality Monitoring Program. Instead of just focusing on waterway monitoring, WE lets students look at all factors, past and present, affecting a watershed. It's an action-oriented, multi-disciplinary curriculum promoting research and decision-making skills. WE also meets many of the proposed academic learning standards for the environment.

An exciting program component is the use of Internet technology, which allows students to enter and compare data along with research experiences through a Web page. The former program relied on paper reports only, making it difficult to compile and share information. The Web page and database will be up and running in 1999. ❖

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