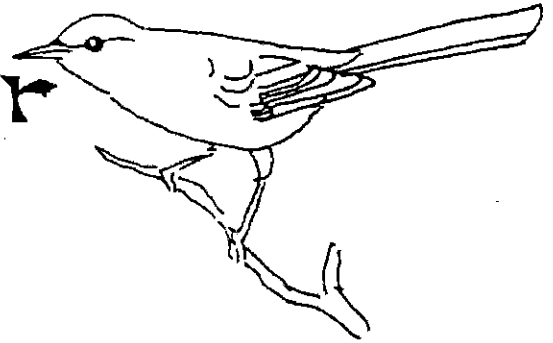


The Gnatcatcher



Newsletter of the Juniata Valley Audubon Society

P.O. Box 32, Tyrone, Pennsylvania 16686

Vol. 32, No. 5 – October 2000

More Than 5000 Acres Added to State Game Lands In Upper Juniata Valley

By Dr. Stan Kotala, JVAS Past President



After a long and tortuous battle for a much-overdue hunting license fee increase, the Pennsylvania Game Commission is back in the business of buying land for wildlife. To date, the PGC owns nearly 1½ million acres, much of it in south-central Pennsylvania.

Several purchases this past spring should be of particular interest to JVAS members. By far, the most significant of these is the 2688 acres of the Suppes Estate, a forested tract with ten acres of wetlands. It is located east of Petersburg along the Juniata River and extends northeastward toward Pa. Route 26. The property will become a new game land, designated SGL 322.

Also in Huntingdon County, the PGC has acquired 1311 acres to be added to SGL 71, on Jacks Mountain, bringing this game land's acreage up to 5433.

Blair County will see 1262 acres added to SGL 198, along the Allegheny Front, increasing this game land's size to 8459 acres.

Thanks to the Pennsylvania Game Commission, JVAS members can be assured that large portions of the Juniata Valley will remain forever wild.

If you're in the area, be sure to stop by the PGC's Southcentral Regional Office, on U.S. Rt. 22 west of Huntingdon, and say thanks to Land Management Supervisor Rob Criswell and Land Management Officer Steve Kleiner for their outstanding work! ❖

⌘ ⌘ ⌘

— October Program —

"ATTU BIRDING TRAVELOGUE" JVASers Dave Kyler and Gene Zielinski will recount their adventures during a birding trip in late May to the island of Attu. The remote island in southwestern Alaska is the most westerly of the Aleutians.

7 P.M., Tuesday, Oct. 17 in the Visitor Center at Canoe Creek State Park

— Field Trips —

FALL FOLIAGE HIKE ON THE LOWER TRAIL. Tim Cole, a service forester from Pennsylvania State Forest District 5 will lead a walk along the Lower Trail to identify hardwood trees and discuss the changing colors of tree leaves during the fall season. This will be a joint hike with members of Rails to Trails of Central Pa. For additional information, phone Terry Wentz at 692-4224.

10 A.M., Saturday, Oct. 14, at the Alfarata Trail Head, Alexandria

BIRDING ALONG THE BEAVER POND TRAIL. Dr. Stan Kotala will lead JVAS members on a leisurely one-mile stroll along Canoe Creek State Park's newest trail. Overlooking beaver lodges and dams, this is an excellent place to see a great variety and large numbers of birds. Meet at the *Park Office* at 2 P.M. We'll carpool to the trailhead. Call Stan at 946-8840 or 949-3663 for more information.

2 P.M., Sunday, Nov. 5, at the Park Office, Canoe Creek State Park

The Gnatcatcher

VOL. 32, NO. 5 — OCTOBER 2000

Published six times a year (February/March, April, May/June, September, October, and November) as a benefit for members by the

JUNIATA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY
 Charlie Hoyer, Editor
 P.O. Box 32
 Tyrone, PA 16686-0032

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 Tuesday 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.

Officers

President Charlie Hoyer 684-7376
 <charma@nb.net>
 Vice-President Cindy Moore 946-9441
 <lmoore8227@aol.com>
 Secretary Eugene Zielinski 353-8212
 <eez55@juno.com>
 Treasurer Marge Hoyer 684-7376
 <charma@nb.net>

Committee Chairs

Membership Cindy Moore (see above)
 Programs Cindy Moore (see above)
 Conservation Sarah J. Miller 684-2226
 <garynsarah@prodigy.net>
 Field Trips Janet Huber 942-5752
 <avianao@aol.com>
 Publications
 & Publicity Charlie Hoyer (see above)
 Education Shirley Wagoner 643-4011
 <swagoner@vicon.net>
 Hospitality Barb Corle 276-3428
 Historian Terry Wentz 692-4224
 <dtw1999@home.com>

Directors

Fund-raising Director ... Anne Borland 695-9718
 Director of Ornithology Debora Wentz 692-4224
 <dtw1999@home.com>
 Director-at-Large Dave Kyler 643-6030
 <kylerdw@vicon.net>

From the Gnatcatcher's Nest

Membership in the National Audubon Society isn't growing and hasn't grown significantly in ten years. Because membership growth is fundamental to the health of the entire organization, the NAS is now implementing a membership growth strategy that includes a new Chapter dues-share policy effective July 1, 2001. The new policy will cause a reduction in revenue for the JVAS unless we improve our member retention and increase the number of Chapter-recruited members.

JVAS Vice President Cindy Moore has graciously agreed to serve as interim Membership Chair. Cindy will work closely with me in embarking on a campaign to retain our present members, acquire new members, and seek the return of those who for some reason let their memberships lapse.

We shall work with National and the State Office to strive for a stronger, more effective, and more involved membership. We shall accept the offers of assistance made by the National Membership Department to expand our membership in a meaningful manner.

You can help by giving the form below to a friend, neighbor, colleague, or relative who you think would want to be "involved" in the Audubon Society.

Charlie

If you're reading this newsletter but are not a member of the National Audubon Society, you're invited to join by mailing the coupon to:

Juniata Valley Audubon Society
 P.O. Box 32
 Tyrone, PA 16686-0032

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

NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY Membership Application

- YES, I want to join the Juniata Valley Audubon Society and the National Audubon Society at the special Introductory Rate of \$20.
- As a senior citizen or student, I'm eligible to join for only \$15.

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

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ PA _____

U03

CONSERVATION
CORNER
By Sarah J. Miller
**1st Annual Juniata
Watershed Summit Set**

Saturday, October 28 marks the First Annual Juniata Watershed Summit, to be held at Juniata College, in Huntingdon. Sponsored by the Juniata Clean Water Partnership, the summit will provide practical information for existing watershed groups as well as the hows and whys of forming a new watershed association. Topics to be discussed include how to organize a watershed association, introduction to grant writing, creating a community vision, and how to work effectively with your local government.

The one-day summit is divided into three sections. First, well-known author, photographer, and adventurer Tim Palmer will open the conference by presenting a slide show titled "Lifelines, the Case for River Conservation." The presentation will be followed by three breakout discussion sessions covering a variety of topics. The summit will conclude with a panel discussion on forming successful watershed organizations. In this session, panelists will share how and why they got started, as well as their success stories.

Registration is \$5 and includes lunch, T-shirt, and conference materials. For more information, contact the Juniata Clean Water Partnership at (814) 627-5391 or via e-mail at <jcwp@jcwp.org>. ❖

**Why NAS Joined as a Plaintiff
In the I-99 Lawsuit**
By Jack Cupper
Past President, Tiadaghton Audubon Society

It is emphasized that neither PA Audubon nor the National Audubon Society is against the need for a better highway than the existing U.S. Rt. 220; they are against constructing the interstate highway on the Bald Eagle Ridge. The Pennsylvania Audubon Society is not mentioned in the lawsuit since the NAS has all the lawyers with the related expertise.

The lawsuit was endorsed by PA Audubon President Carmen Santasania and State Director Cindy Dunn.

Further, please consider that the Pennsylvania Audubon Society has been involved in the 220/I-99 highway since 1995 and supports the valley route.

The decision to designate the Bald Eagle Ridge as an Important Bird Area in 1997 was made by Pennsylvania's top ornithologists. An IBA is recognized nationally as an area that is vital to birds during some stage in their life. The Ornithological Technical Committee of the Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology examined the data, including information from Hawk Mountain, about the ridge's importance to golden eagles and other raptors. Bald Eagle Ridge is the largest flyway for golden eagles in eastern North America. It would be foolish to put a highway right on the ridge when we have a reasonable choice.

Additionally, the forested ridge provides important nesting habitat for forest-interior nesting birds. The ridge route would destroy several thousand acres of irreplaceable interior forests and adjacent wetlands that are fed from the many high-quality, cold-water springs that are so important to aquatic life in both the North and South Bald Eagle Creeks. These areas are needed by Neotropical migrant birds. Neotropical migrants are birds that move seasonally between the colder climatic regions of North America (like Pennsylvania and the ridge area), where the birds nest, and warm, tropical areas of Mexico, the Caribbean, Latin America, and northern South America, where they spend the winter. During the 1998 Bird/Hydrology Survey/Study by a team led by professional ornithologists, the team observed and recorded seventy-nine species of birds. A high percentage of these were breeding pairs; several species recorded have declining populations.

Neotropical migrants include scarlet tanagers, vireos, Baltimore orioles, tree swallows, and wood warblers. These long-distance migrant songbird species, which now depend on the ridge-side interior forest habitat, will have nowhere else to go to breed, period, within that ecosystem — it is irreplaceable.

Cont'd on next page

Herpetological Atlas Data Due

It's been another great year for the Herpetological Atlas Project in the western Ridge and Valley Region, with nearly 1000 new records being reported so far.

If you did any work for the project in Blair, Bedford, Huntingdon, Mifflin, Juniata, Perry, or Fulton County, please mail your results to Dr. Stan Kotala, Western Ridge & Valley Regional Coordinator, Pennsylvania Herpetological Atlas Project, R.R. 3, Box 866, Altoona, PA 16601.

Thanks for your help! ❖

— Stan

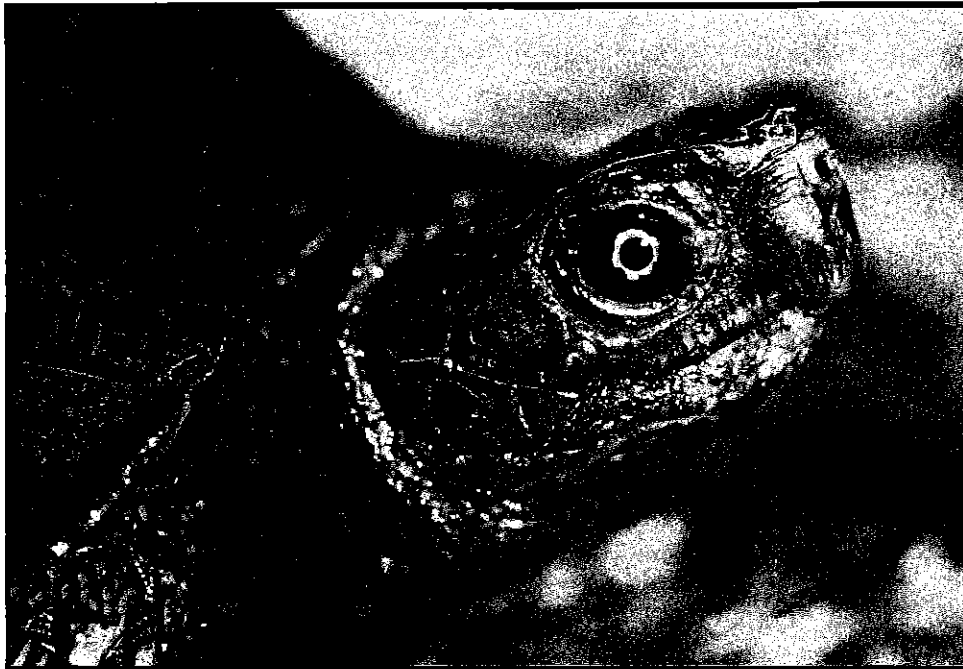
... I-99 Lawsuit (Cont'd)

The ridge provides habitat for thirty-three species of these birds, as documented by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Penn State wildlife professionals. Both groups also have noted that the ridge provides a higher quality habitat for Neotropical migrants than is available in the valley because of the lack of forested areas (gone by development).

The Bald Eagle Ridge is an IBA, something that Auduboners hold very dear. We have shown with strong scientific proof that the area is an extremely important habitat for birds and other wildlife and a source of clean, cold water — so important to the

native brook trout found in Blue Spring. Also, there is the issue of habitat loss. All experienced biologists agree that habitat loss is the number-one reason for species decline.

Numerous acres of Penn's Woods and prime wetlands would be lost forever if this ridge-route project is completed. The Pennsylvania Audubon Society does not want to see this happen and will do everything in its power to prevent it! ❖



Wood turtle in State Game Lands 166

Mark Your Calendars

The Christmas Bird Count for the "Culp circle" will be held on Saturday, December 16. I'm relying on past participants and looking for anyone else who might like to help this year. More info will be given in the next issue of *The Gnatcatcher*. If you'd like details now, call me at 692-4224 or send an e-mail message to <dtw1999@home.com>.

— Debbie Wentz, JVAS CBC Compiler

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.

Golden Days

A golden day in late September and I'm determined to enjoy it despite my nasty cold. I wait most of the morning until First Field warms up after a frosty dawn. Then I slowly follow Butterfly Loop, reveling in the clumps of bright goldenrod amid the dried grasses.

Monarch butterflies nectar on the goldenrod. Praying mantises sit poised and waiting for unwary prey to bumble past. Locust borers, displaying bubble gum-pink legs, still prowl the flowers, looking for mates and food. Native bumblebees pack their pollen pouches.

Crickets and katydids sing from the depths of the grasses with almost as much volume and vigor as the eastern towhees, whose antiphonal calls reverberate from the forest bordering the field. A black-throated green warbler forages among the grapevines swathing the trees at the field's edge, and a house wren, scolding vigorously, flies up from the base of a cluster of newly sprouted black locust trees. I add a drumming woodpecker, wheeling turkey vulture, honking Canada goose, and screaming blue jays to my bird list before returning home to rest.

In late afternoon I take another short amble, this one through a forest lit by the slanting autumn sun. The understory is ablaze with the gold of witch hazel and black birch and the pink, purple, crimson, and orange of black gum trees. I sit on Turtle Bench watching a gray squirrel harvesting witch hazel nuts, shaking the slender tree with its weight, while a chipmunk, also harvesting nuts, rushes up and down another witch hazel.

By Marcia Bonta

The woods floor seems to undulate with chasing and foraging chipmunks. Wherever I look, I see half a dozen running in every direction. My own particular chipmunk, the one whose burrow hole is four feet from where I sit, finally appears, a de-capped acorn in its mouth. It slips into its burrow, then reappears several seconds later, off to collect more food. I'm relieved it is still around after watching it make several trips in and out of its burrow several days ago.

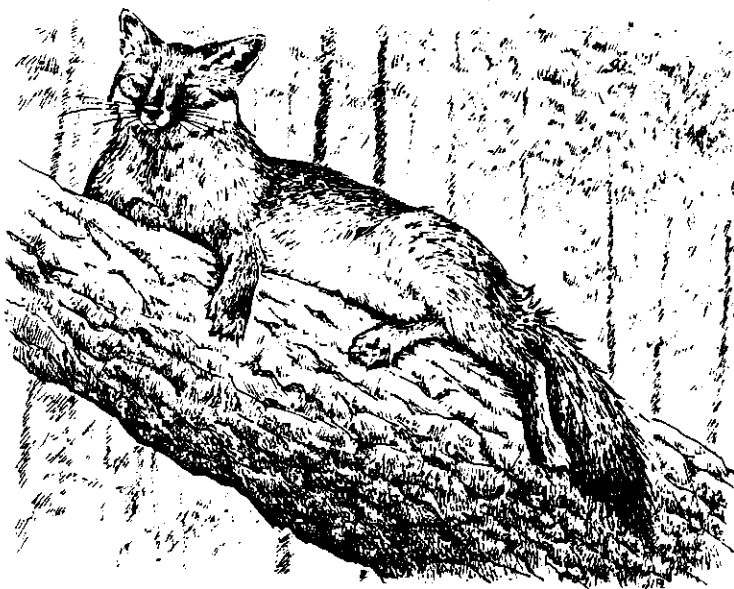
It's 5 P.M. now, time to go home and make a salad for dinner. Walking quietly and slowly along Short Circuit Trail, I savor the beauty of the autumnal forest.

As I near the power line right-of-way, I spot a small animal moving toward me on the trail, intent on hunting. At first I think it is the feral cat that has been living in our forest and fields. But still I freeze and watch as it trots closer and closer. By now I know it is not a cat.

Finally, seventy feet away, it pauses and looks at me. I

don't need binoculars to identify the handsome gray fox, its white cheeks and throat broken by a line of black across its muzzle, its neck and chest patched in reddish brown. After a considered second or two, it turns around and hurries back down the trail, leaving a forest of "chipping" chipmunks in its wake. And one excited naturalist, I might add.

Why was it abroad earlier than usual? Was it in pursuit of the overabundant chipmunks or the equally abundant crickets and grasshoppers it also likes to eat? Whatever its reason, I was happy to have a glimpse of this usually elusive, nocturnal, tree-climbing fox. And I was glad to have proven my point that even short walks can be rewarding. ❖



Learn About Rainforest Ecology. . . Firsthand

Do you enjoy adding new birds to your life list? Are you interested in rainforest and island ecology? Do you enjoy snorkeling and exploring tide pools? If you answered 'yes' to any of these questions, consider joining the Pennsylvania Audubon Society from April 21-29, 2001 as members travel to the islands of Trinidad and Tobago.

Located off the coast of Venezuela, the diverse ecosystem of Trinidad and Tobago provides an oasis for nature enthusiasts. Participants will stay at the world-renowned Asa-Wright Nature Center and Lodge, a 200-acre wildlife sanctuary in Trinidad's rainforested Northern Range and at the charming Blue Waters Inn in Tobago. Each day provides new

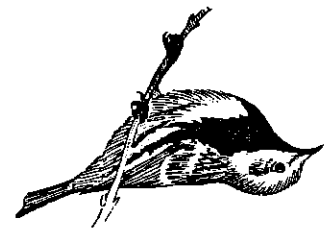
adventures and new habitats, from rainforests to tide pools.

First-time visitors may add 20-30 birds to their list before their first island breakfast, as well as adding many new plants and other wildlife species!

Participants will fly from either Philadelphia or Pittsburgh to Port-of-Spain, Trinidad, where they will be transported to the Asa-Wright Nature Center and Lodge. The group will spend four additional days on the island before departing for Tobago and Little Tobago Islands.

For a brochure, itinerary, and fees, e-mail Marci Mowery at <mmowery@audubon.org> or call her at (717) 213-6880. ❖

PRINTED BY WICK COPY CENTER, 503 E. PLANK RD., ALTOONA



Juniata Valley Audubon Society
P.O. Box 32
Tyrone, PA 16686-0032

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Altoona, Pa.
Permit No. 238