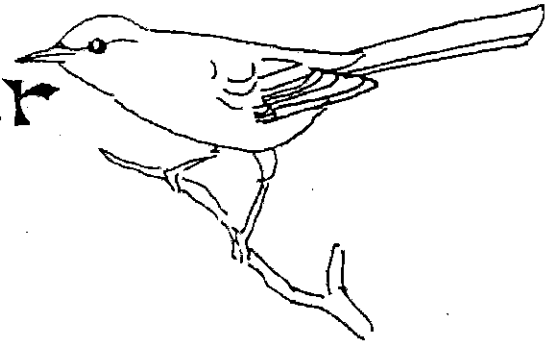


The Gnatcatcher



Newsletter of the
Juniata Valley Audubon Society

P.O. Box 32, Tyrone, Pennsylvania 16686

Vol. 32, No. 6 – November 2000

Congress Passes Historic Bill To Save the Everglades



able to reach consensus on a number of issues, the U.S. Congress could not adjourn the 106th Congress early this month. Instead, they voted to break for the elections and to reconvene shortly thereafter to complete their work.

Just before leaving Washington, the U.S. Congress gave final approval to historic legislation to save the Everglades.

One of Audubon's top priorities, the final bill authorizes and secures funding for a series of projects to return the natural quantity, quality, timing, and distribution of freshwater to the Everglades. The multi-year project will return the natural flow of water to the "river of grass" and improve the habitat of the sixty-eight threatened or endangered species and hundreds of other species of birds, other wildlife, and plants that call the Everglades home.

This is a major victory for Audubon, and for the many, many people who have fought to pass this legislation over the past ten years.

The bill, which will be signed into law by President Clinton in the coming days, secures \$7.8 billion over thirty years for nearly sixty projects that will restore, preserve, and protect the Everglades ecosystem as well as provide other water-related needs for southern Florida. For an in-depth analysis of what is included in the overall bill, please contact Shannon Mayorga at <smayorga@audubon.org>.

Many thanks to you for contacting your lawmakers regarding this historic legislation — it made a difference! ❖

— From "Audubon Advisory," via e-mail

— November Program —

"RARE BIRDS OF PENNSYLVANIA." Gerald M. McWilliams will give a slide show/talk on the rare birds of Pennsylvania. Jerry is senior author of the book, "The Birds of Pennsylvania," recently published by Cornell University Press, and co-author of the book, "Birds of Erie County, Pennsylvania." He also will explain why birds that may appear rare will seem common when an observer becomes skillful in finding them.

7 P.M., Tuesday, Nov. 21 in the Visitor Center at Canoe Creek State Park

— Field Trips —

No field trips are scheduled until late winter 2001.

— Christmas Bird Count —

Saturday, Dec. 16 is the JVAS's annual Christmas Bird Count. The CBC began 101 years ago as an alternative to holiday bird shoots that went on. The event includes driving and walking to count birds within a defined area. JVAS Director for Ornithology Debbie Wertz will compile the results of individual and team counters at a covered dish supper at day's end. See page 6 for more info.

The Gnatcatcher

VOL. 32, NO. 6 — NOVEMBER 2000

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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.

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From the Gnatcatcher's Nest

The National Audubon Society is offering a special incentive to local chapters to recruit new members during the months of October, November, and December 2000. The Juniata Valley Audubon Society will receive \$30 for each new member recruited during this period.

If you know someone who enjoys birds or values our natural environment, now is the perfect time to introduce him or her to Audubon. Consider a gift membership for that hard-to-buy-for friend or family member.

Because this is a special offer, membership applications must be coded in a special way. Please clip (or photocopy) the form below and mail with your check to Membership Chair Cindy Moore at Juniata Valley Audubon Society, P.O. Box 32, Tyrone, PA 16686.

Please don't mail applications directly to National, or the JVAS will not receive the \$30 bonus.

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 _____

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CONSERVATION
CORNER

By Sarah J. Miller

**Magazines and Books —
Holiday Gifts for Youngsters**

With Christmas right around the corner, you may find yourself searching for the perfect gift for a grandchild, niece or nephew, or even your own kid. As the daughter of a children's librarian, books and magazines always had been big in our house, and I still think they make the best gifts.

The National Wildlife Federation publishes three children's magazines that will introduce kids to the wonders of nature year-round. *Wild Animal Baby* is geared for children from twelve months to three years. It features bright colors, lovable animals, and interactive educational activities for parents to share with their toddlers. For children from three to six years of age, there is *Your Big Back Yard*. This magazine contains "read-to-me" stories, nature games and puzzles, and a special section called "The Parents' Pages" that focuses on fun-filled family activities. Finally, there's *Ranger Rick*, hailed as one of the finest children's magazines today. *Ranger Rick* contains puzzles games, riddles, and outdoor activities for children from seven to twelve years. To subscribe to any of these magazines, contact the National Wildlife Federation at (800) 822-9919.

If you're in the market for a book, there are several that have nature or environmental themes. For preschoolers, my mother recommends *Eye Spy a Panda*, *How Many Bugs in a Box*, *Creepy Crawly Baby Bugs*, and *While You Sleep*. For four to eight-year-olds, there are the classics *The Lorax* and *The Wump World*, as well as newer titles such as *Stellaluna*, and *Brother Eagle, Sister Sky*. Older children (ages nine to twelve) will enjoy *Julie of the Wolves* and *The Case of the Missing Cutthroats, an Ecological Mystery*. Of course, Audubon also publishes a series of first field guides for older kids that cover a myriad of subjects. All of these books can be found or ordered at your favorite bookstore or purchased on-line through Amazon.com.

Happy shopping! ❖

A Small Victory for CARA

You made it happen! The Commerce, Justice, and State appropriations conference report passed in the House late last month. The focus of recent CARA campaigning, this bill contained an additional \$50 million for fish and wildlife conservation. And the *only* reason it contained wildlife funding was because of the national outcry that ensued after CARA Lite was foisted upon us.

The bill contains a one-year, \$50 million appropriation for wildlife conservation that's *guaranteed* for wildlife — not bundled into a federal competitive-grants system like CARA Lite. While it is not everything we hoped for, it is a great start. Pennsylvania's fish and wildlife agencies will have more money to devote to conserving wildlife diversity than ever before. (Pennsylvania's share could be as much as \$1.8 million split between the Game Commission and Fish & Boat Commission.)

Following are some highlights of the wildlife provision:


- Appropriates \$50 million (one year) for wildlife conservation, recreation (capped at ten percent of a state's allocation), and education.
- Amends the Federal Aid to Wildlife Restoration Act (Pittman-Robertson) to create the new wildlife conservation program.
- Provides funds directly to the states based upon a formula (1/3 land area and 2/3 population) with a one-percent floor and five-percent ceiling.
- Provides a priority for funding for species with the greatest conservation need as defined by the state wildlife conservation and restoration program.

Obviously, we shall continue our efforts to make sure that wildlife conservation gets the funding it deserves in the next Congressional session. But for now, let's sit back and enjoy the moment that you all worked so hard to make happen! Thank you!

The language of the bill can be found in two parts (wildlife begins on page 41 of the second document) at:

< <http://www.house.gov/rules/cjs1.pdf> > and
< <http://www.house.gov/rules/cjs2.pdf> > .

— Lisa Williams




JVAS Hike On Beaver Pond Trail, Canoe Creek State Park

NOVEMBER 5, 2000

Text and photos by
Dr. Stan Kotala

One of the three large dams built by beavers on Canoe Creek within park boundaries. Another, much larger, dam complex lies a few miles upstream, in State Game Lands 166.



By the beginning of the twentieth century, beavers had been largely eliminated from Pennsylvania by overtrapping. Strict regulation by the Pa. Game Commission has restored beavers to their present sustainable populations.



Canoe Creek's beavers have prepared the lodge for winter by adding a cover of fresh mud. Each lodge is occupied by one family of beavers, which consists of parents, kits, and the previous year's young.



JVAS members on the Beaver Pond Trail hike. From left, Dr. Alice Kotala, Elisabeth Kotala, Floyd Mitchell, Kathleen Mitchell, Shirley Wagoner, Luis Moore, Cindy Moore, Helena Kotala, Charlie Hoyer, Mabel Michael, Liz Ream, Bob Washburn, Cheryl Washburn, Barb Baird, Lucy Wolfe, and Dr. Stan Kotala. Also participating in the field trip, but not pictured, were Jody Wallace, Connor Shields, Arran Shields, and Lizzie Shields.

Audubon Christmas Bird Count – 2000

This year the JVAS will be doing its Christmas Bird Count on Saturday, December 16. Debbie Wentz again will compile the results. Those who have helped in the past we hope to see again this year. We'd also like to see some new faces.

The bird count area covers a 15-mile-diameter circle centered on the village of Culp, in Sinking Valley. The counting can be done in the field or it can be a feeder count taken the day of the count. There's always room for any level of birder. We'll try to pair up those who feel they'd like to be with a more experienced birder or who'd just like some company.

The Hoyers again will open their home to us for our evening covered-dish supper. We always have a good time, and it's a good excuse to get out of the house.

If you have any questions or would like to participate and haven't done so in the past, please contact Debbie by phone at 692-4224, by e-mail at <dtw1999@home.com>, or by snail-mail at 405 Lutz Ln., Port Matilda, PA 16870. ❖

— Debbie Wentz
JVAS Director for Ornithology

Gift Book Ideas for Christmas 2000

This past year or so has seen the publishing of a wealth of fine natural history books relating to Pennsylvania and eastern U.S. In fact, several of the authors live in Pennsylvania. They are **Dan Brauning**, of Lycoming County; **Chuck Fergus**, of Port Matilda; **Jerry McWilliams**, of Erie; and **Scott Weidensaul**, of Schuylkill Haven.

Book suggestions for holiday giving to that special someone (including yourself) are:

The Birds of Pennsylvania, by Gerald M. McWilliams and Daniel W. Brauning, Cornell University Press, 2000. The most comprehensive volume on Pennsylvania's birds since Warren's *Birds of Pennsylvania*, published in 1890. The book treats all 428 species of birds seen in Pennsylvania, including

breeding and wintering birds, migrants, and vagrants. Each accessibly written entry provides the general status of a species; the locations where it is most commonly found; its natural habitat, migratory patterns, breeding habits, and seasonal status and distribution; and a summary of the bird's history in Pennsylvania.

Birds of North America, by Kenn Kaufman, Houghton Mifflin Company, 2000. Kenn has digitally edited more than 2000 images to exactly show how to recognize each bird. This revolutionary new method of illustration, together with vivid descriptions with key markings, cuts through the clutter to clearly "focus" on the essentials.

National Audubon Society : The Sibley Guide to Birds, written and illustrated by David Allen Sibley, Alfred A. Knopf, 2000. North America's definitive guide to birding. Information and illustrations for each species are arranged the same way on every page with size, flight (underside and upperside), voice, plumage variations, and other topics are always in the same position. Comparing any species with another involves simply scanning horizontally across the pages.

Wildlife of Pennsylvania and the Northeast, by Charles Fergus with illustrations by Amelia Hansen, Stackpole Books, 2000. The most comprehensive book available on the natural history of Pennsylvania wildlife, mixing solid scientific information with Chuck's own observations and anecdotes.

Birds of Pennsylvania Field Guide, by Stan Tekiello, Adventure Publications, 2000. A truly pocket field guide containing 117 species accounts of Pennsylvania birds arranged by color and size. Full-page color photos with facing full-page descriptions.

Living on the Wind : Across the Hemisphere with Migratory Birds, by Scott Weidensaul, North Point Press (a division of Farrar, Straus and Giroux), 1999. Scott has brought together the classical ex-

(Cont'd on page 8)

Peace on Earth



I felt like a Druid as I sat on the rough-hewn granite block waiting for the sun to rise. My disconnection continued as the sun crested a nearby ridge and Terry Murray struck a Hindu temple bell ten times. It was 7:31 A.M. on October 11 and Terry, her husband Andy, my husband Bruce, and I were the only participants at the Elizabeth Evans Baker Peace Chapel's year-long sunrise prayers for peace.

On that lovely morning, Terry offered a short, interfaith prayer, followed by a time of silence, and finished with a second prayer from her own faith tradition. Then she rang the bell eleven times to end the session. Throughout the year, the prayers, or meditations, have been centered on peace among humans, echoing that age-old desire for "peace on earth, goodwill toward men."

Yet, on my way to the Peace Chapel, as I listened to the dawn songs and calls of eastern towhees, white-throated sparrows, Carolina wrens, blue jays, cardinals, a winter wren, Canada geese, and American crows, watched a cottontail rabbit leap across the mowed path leading to the chapel, and surveyed the old fields of milkweed, goldenrod, and asters, my silent prayers for peace took a different turn. Not only were they petitions for peace among humans but for humanity's peaceful relationship with the entire earth — that miraculous globe that sustains us and which we are rapidly stripping of its life-giving biodiversity.

Certainly, the natural, yet human-impacted setting of the chapel, a 170-acre old farm reverting to forest, inspired my prayers. So too did the Peace Chapel's stark simplicity. Instead of an enclosed building, as the word *chapel* suggests, it consists of two stone monuments open to the sky. One is for public and the other for private meditations.

To reach the public space, we had to walk nearly a half-mile uphill before ascending twenty-four granite steps to a forty-foot circle of fifty-three granite blocks. It was there that we watched the sunrise and admired the sweeping view of Huntingdon and nearby mountains.

Later, we climbed still higher to the second site — a forest of young red, chestnut, and white oaks, hickory, black gum, and pitch pine. In the center of the grove is a smooth, four-foot-in-diameter granite disk. The site glowed from the sunlight shining through the golden leaves as gray squirrels foraged for acorns.

The Peace Chapel was designed and constructed by architect and sculptor Maya Lin, the young woman who also designed the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. Her work always is "site specific," she says. "What I choose to introduce into the land doesn't try to dominate or overwhelm the existing landscape, but instead tries to work with it, to produce a new experience of the site." In other words, she tries to work peacefully with the natural world.

Her vision must have pleased Elizabeth Evans Baker, a peace activist for whom the Peace Chapel is named. Baker also loved the beauty of this earth and wrote, in part,

*"Under the boundless sky
A speck in the star-filled universe,
This earth, this spinning planet,
This world is God's gift to us."*

And what have we done with that gift? ❖

NOTE: Sunrise Prayers continue until the end of 2000. For more information, call Juniata College's Baker Institute for Peace and Conflict Studies at 641-3464 or check their Web site at <<http://departments.juniata.edu/pacs/sunrise.htm>>. If you go, set aside some extra time to walk the trails of the 170-acre, surrounding bird and nature preserve. Don't forget your binoculars!

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.

It's Illegal to Possess Nests or Eggs

The same federal statutes (primarily the Migratory Bird Treaty Act) that make it illegal to possess feathers or body parts also make it illegal to possess nests or eggs from protected species. At the time the law was written, collecting eggs and nests was a big pastime in both North America and Europe. (And illegal egg-collecting still is a big problem in England.)

It doesn't matter if the nest is old and unused, for the same reason that you can't keep a feather that was naturally molted — it would create a loophole that might encourage the collecting of active nests (or feathers off birds killed for that purpose). ❖

— Scott Weidensaul, via e-mail

Gift Books (cont'd from page 6)

periments of the 1950s, which began to reveal the wonders of bird migration, and the ongoing discoveries of the present day. If you are a fan of skilled natural-history writing or have a friend who is, this book would make a perfect gift.

Butterflies through Binoculars: The East, by Jeffrey Glassberg, Oxford University Press, 1999. Is perhaps the best field guide to the butterflies of eastern North America. Focuses on netless butterfly flying, thereby emphasizing conservation over collecting. Contains 625 color photos of butterflies in the wild and entirely new field marks for butterfly identification. Range maps. ❖

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