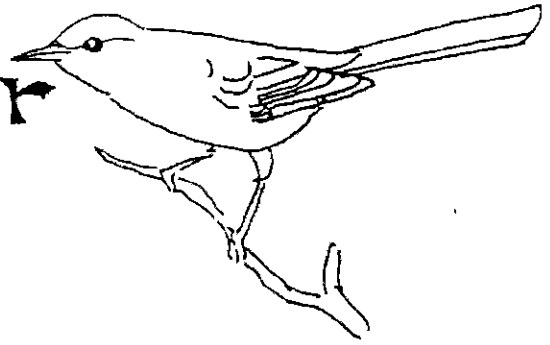


The Gnatcatcher



Newsletter of the Juniata Valley Audubon Society

P.O. Box 32, Tyrone, Pennsylvania 16686

Vol. 33, No. 2 — March 2001

Juniata River Named 'Pennsylvania River Of the Year' for 2001

Secretary John Oliver, of the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) announced recently that the Juniata River has been selected as Pennsylvania's River of the Year for 2001. According to Secretary Oliver, "The Juniata River is a worthy representative for Pennsylvania's rich natural and cultural river values."

In honor of the River of the Year designation, the Juniata Clean Water Partnership (JCWP) will play host to a Juniata River sojourn in June. The sojourn will be the focus of DCNR's June Rivers Month activities and will begin with a kickoff event at Raystown Lake on June 1. Scores of canoers and kayakers will enter the Raystown Branch of the Juniata River on Saturday, June 2 just below Raystown Dam. Eight days and ninety-seven miles later, the sojourners will end their journey in Duncannon, at the confluence of the Juniata and the Susquehanna Rivers.

The Juniata River received this honor in part because of recently completed planning efforts within the Juniata watershed. In the autumn of 2000, the JCWP completed and released the Juniata Watershed Management Plan — the culmination of years of planning and partnership work that began in May 1998 when the Mid-State RC&D Inc. and the Southern Alleghenies Conservancy, charter members of the JCWP, partnered to receive a DCNR Rivers Conservation planning grant. The grant allowed the

[Cont'd on page 8]

— March Program —

"BIRD SONGING: THE ECOLOGY OF BIRDS' SONGS AND IDENTIFYING THEM BY EAR." Freelance naturalist and science writer Daniel Edelstein, M.S., of Germantown, Md., will tell how to improve your "bird singing" listening and identification skills. He'll explain why birds sing, how they learn their repertoires, and the social and survival values that lie behind their eloquent songs and calls that delight us. Daniel also will talk on non-vocal sounds birds make that immediately reveal their identity. Finally, he'll discuss some listening methods, devices, and simple technology you can use to better know the identity of singing and calling birds.

7 P.M., Tuesday, Mar. 20 in the Visitor Center at Canoe Creek State Park.

— Field Trips —

MIDDLE CREEK WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA. JVAS board member David Kyler (phone 643-6030) will lead a one-day field trip to the Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area, Lancaster Co., to observe spring migrants at this waterfowl stopover.

9 A.M., Saturday, Mar. 10 ("rain or shine"). Meet in the parking lot at McDonald's Restaurant on Rt. 22, Huntingdon. Bring a bag lunch to eat at the Visitor Center. We'll stop on the way home for supper.

AMPHIBIAN PROGRAM AND FIELD TRIP. Dr. Stan Kotala will present a slide show on the amphibians and reptiles of the Juniata Valley. Live specimens will be on hand. Following will be a field trip along Mary Ann's Creek in the park. For more info, phone Stan at 946-8840.

2 P.M., Sunday, Apr. 1 in the Visitor Center at Canoe Creek State Park.

— Board Meeting —

JVAS Board members will meet at 7 P.M. in the Visitor Center at Canoe Creek State Park on Tuesday, Apr. 3. All Juniata Valley Audubon members are welcome to attend.

The Gnatcatcher

VOL. 33, NO. 2 — MARCH 2001

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

JUNIATA VALLEY AUDUBON
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 all of Blair and Bedford Counties, and portions of Cambria, Centre, Clearfield, Fulton, and Huntingdon 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
<bnbcorle@yellowbananas.com>
- 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

According to Bruce Carl, members of the Lancaster County Bird Club spent Saturday morning, March 3 looking for waterfowl at the Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area, in Lancaster County. Highlights of the morning included twenty species of waterfowl:

Snow goose, 80,000 (est.); tundra swan, 6,000-8,000; canvas-back, 8; gadwall, 4; horned grebe, 2; hooded merganser, 9; wood duck, 1; blue-winged teal, 1; lesser scaup, 3; and American coot, 2. Other species observed were Canada goose, mallard, black duck, American wigeon, northern shoveler, ruddy duck, ring-necked duck, common merganser, northern pintail, and green-winged teal.

Additional birds of note included a nesting great horned owl, two northern harriers, a Cooper's hawk, and two bald eagles.

Trip leader David Kyler isn't guaranteeing that you'll see twenty waterfowl species in these numbers on the JVAS field trip to Middle Creek on Saturday, March 10, but "you never know!"

Join us for an exciting one-day trip with an expert guide. We'll leave from Huntingdon at 9 A.M. and return before dark. (See box on the front page.)

Charlie

* * *

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

Juniata Valley Audubon Society
Cindy Moore, Membership Chair
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 Juniata Valley Audubon's newsletter, *The Gnatcatcher*, containing articles on local conservation topics and nature themes.



AUDUBON 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 Audubon, is enclosed.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ PA _____

7XCH U03

CONSERVATION

O
R
N
E
R

By Sarah J. Miller

**A Call to Arms
For Conservationists**

Why does it seem like there are some conservation issues that just won't go away? Twelve years ago, while working as an environmental consultant in New Jersey, I wrote a letter to the local paper denouncing legislation to open up the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil exploration.

More than a decade later, I am once again writing my representatives to oppose drilling in this beautiful and fragile wilderness.

The Conservation and Reinvestment Act, or CARA, is another issue that had strong bipartisan support last year, but is getting little notice this year from the Bush Administration.

The sad truth remains that the fate of conservation measures often are at the whim of politics, and with a new administration in office, no piece of legislation is safe. As conservationists, now, more than ever, we need to remain vigilant of our government's activities and make sure that we are heard!

An easy way to stay informed on conservation news and participate in conservation efforts is to subscribe to Audubon Advisory — a free, twice-monthly e-mail update on issues affecting our environment that is distributed every other week while Congress is in session. To subscribe, send an e-mail message to < audubonaction@audubon.org >. Provide your name, mailing address, and the e-mail address of where you would like to receive your Advisory.

Make your voice heard! ❖

**Bald Eagles Scarce on
Conowingo Dam Field Trip**

Those Auduboners who ventured to Conowingo Dam, Maryland, on Presidents' Weekend to view bald eagles were rewarded — not with eagles (we saw two), but with a couple dozen great blue herons.

Saturday was a cold and very blustery day but with lots of sunshine. So rather than try to observe birds from the overlook we went out on the dam and, therefore, out of the wind. The closest birds were great black-backed gulls (one lesser black-



These JVASers are smiling even though they saw only two bald eagles at Conowingo Dam. *From left*, Charlie Hoyer, Marge Hoyer, Gary Miller, Luis Moore, Debbie Wentz, trip leader Terry Wentz, and Cindy Moore. Terry's brother Darryl Wentz, who is a brand-new Audubon member, took the photo.

backed), ring-billed gulls, herring gulls, and black vultures. Through binocs we viewed common mergs and ring-necked ducks.

On Sunday morning some of us walked the Quaker Race Trail at Gifford Pinchot State Park (we had stayed two nights in cabins at the park) and observed the usual woodland birds along with some yellow-rumped warblers and robins. Terry, by habit, chased several Canada geese from the beach. ❖

2001 Herpetological Atlas Season Begins

The Pennsylvania Herpetological Atlas Project is a six-year endeavor to assess the distribution and abundance of the Keystone State's reptiles and amphibians. Data collected during the project will be used to create an atlas similar to Pennsylvania's breeding bird atlas.

The vast majority of the more than 30,000 amphibian and reptile records so far has been generated by the approximately 900 volunteers who are working under the direction of the Indiana University of Pennsylvania's Dr. Art Hulse. Some have provided only one or two sightings, while others have provided thousands; however, every record is of great importance for the success of the project.

As the regional coordinator of the atlas for the JVAS area, I encourage all of you to participate in this undertaking. To facilitate this, an overview of the approximately seventy reptiles and amphibians that can be found in the Juniata Valley will be presented on Sunday, Apr. 1 from 2 to 4 P.M. in the Visitor Center at Canoe Creek State Park. Atlas handbooks, live specimens, data sheets, posters, and species

monographs will be available for you.

After the slide show and talk, there will be some brief field work along Mary Ann's Creek, near the Visitor Center, where we shall find several common species of frogs, salamanders, snakes, and turtles.



Northern spring salamander in State Game Lands 166.

Refreshments will be available throughout the program.

Hope to see you there! ❖

— Dr. Stan Kotala
Western Ridge and Valley Regional Coordinator
Pennsylvania Herpetological Atlas Project

Beryl Sternagle Recognized for Her Bluebird Monitoring

At the February JVAS meeting, Canoe Creek State Park Manager Terry Wentz presented Beryl Sternagle with a framed Bluebird Trail Monitor certificate for her fifteen years of service at the park. A service award is given by the Bureau of State Parks for each five years of volunteering as a Bluebird Monitor at a local state park. The JVAS has provided monitors for the bluebird boxes at CCSP since the project's inception in 1983. More than 1800 bluebird hatchlings have successfully fledged from the seventy-seven boxes placed throughout the park over the eighteen-year period. The year 2000 holds the record of 185 bluebird fledglings over the span of years that the boxes have been monitored.

This year, additional bluebird boxes will be installed with the help of students in Mr. McCloskey's classes at the Hollidaysburg Jr. High School. Additional volunteers may be needed to monitor the new boxes. Please call the CCSP office at 695-6807 if you'd like to help with the bluebird trails project. ❖

Annual Bluebird Conference Comes to McKeever

Who doesn't love to catch a glimpse of the sky blue of the eastern bluebird? Thanks to the efforts of individuals across the country, that sight is becoming more and more common. Just in time for the start of a new nesting season, the Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania (BSP), in cooperation with the McKeever Environmental Learning Center, is hosting its annual Bluebird Conference on Saturday, March 24, 2001 at the McKeever Center (in Mercer Co.).

The conference is designed to give practicing birders and beginners alike information and networking opportunities to successfully conserve bluebirds in our own habitats. Since bluebirds are cavity-nesters, individuals and wildlife teams can significantly assist the species through proper nest box placement. Topics will include natural history, bluebird trail design, nest box design, predator guards, as well as everything else you need to know to experience success. Ultimately, the goal of the conference is to propagate the bluebird through education.

Nationally known speakers include Dean E. Sheldon, Jr., Connie Toops, and Andrew Troyer.

In his twentieth year of bluebirding, Dean monitors 150 nest boxes on five separate trails in Ohio. He is well-known as a conservationist with experience in wildlife management, forestry, Christmas tree production, and farm pond management. He is a founder of the Firelands Audubon Society and the Ohio Bluebird Society, member of the Advisory Committee of the Birdhouse Network at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, and serves on the board of the North American Bluebird Society.

Connie is a freelance nature writer and photographer whose work has appeared in many conservation magazines including *National Parks*, *Sierra*, *Wilderness*, and *Audubon*. She also is a contributing editor to *Birder's World* and *Nature's Best* magazines. One of Connie's books, *Bluebirds Forever*, was selected by the Mid-America Publisher's Association as Best Color Photographic book of 1995 and by the Midwest Independent Publishers Association as Best

Annual JVAS Spring Banquet

Tuesday, April 24
Trinity United Methodist Church
533 Main St., Bellwood

\$12 per JVAS member
\$15 per nonmember

6 P.M. – Social hour

6:30 P.M. – Delicious family-style roast beef and turkey dinner with all the trimmings

— Program by Scott Weidensaul —

"LIVING ON THE WIND"

Internationally known author Scott Weidensaul, of Schuylkill Haven, will present an enchanting program based on his Pulitzer-finalist work, *Living on the Wind: Across the Hemisphere With Migratory Birds*. This wonderful slide and lecture program will explore the mysteries of bird migration and the many challenges that our feathered friends face on their heroic migrations. The program ranges from the Aleutians in Alaska and the frozen edge of Hudson Bay, Canada through the rain forests of Central and South America to the grass-covered pampas of Argentina.

Environmental/Nature Book of the year.

Andrew Troyer is author of *Bring Back The Bluebirds: Even on Your Hand*. He also operates "The Birds' Paradise," which specializes in the design and construction of pest-resistant housing for purple martins and eastern bluebirds. He is highly regarded as an innovator/inventor in providing predator protection for both species. For years he has been an integral part of the research team at the Purple Martin Conservation Association in Edinboro, Pa. Andy is a recipient of the Blue Feather Award from the Ohio Bluebird Society.

For registration or more information, contact the McKeever Environmental Center, 55 McKeever Lane, Sandy Lake, PA 16145, phone (724) 376-1000, or e-mail at <info@mckeever.org>. ❖

Woodland Owners of the Southern Alleghenies

Fourth Annual Forestry & Wildlife Conference

8:30 A.M. – 3:30 P.M., Saturday, March 31, 2001

American Legion Hall, Old Rt. 220
Bedford, Pennsylvania

Co-sponsored by the Pennsylvania Bureau of Forestry

The story is the understory. When we think about forests, we usually focus on the trees, yet the forest understory is an extremely important component of the forest ecosystem. It is in the understory that much of the wildlife feed and reproduce. A healthy understory also is essential to successful forest regeneration. The Woodland Owners of the Southern Alleghenies has assembled a prestigious group of experts who will help us understand the significance of this often neglected aspect of the forest and give us insight into how to better manage it.

Who should attend? Forest landowners, hunters, members of wildlife organizations, loggers, environmentalists, professional foresters, wildlife professionals, and everyone interested in the present and future condition of our forests.

PROGRAM

Forests for Life: The Forest Stewardship Program. Gene Odat, of the Pennsylvania Bureau of Forestry, will explain how the Forest Stewardship Program can help us manage our forest resources for long-term health and productivity.

Our Forests' Vanishing Residents: The Plants and Shrubs of the Forest Understory. One of the country's leading botanists, Dr. Ann F. Rhoads, of the University of Pennsylvania, will take us on a tour of the forest floor. She will introduce us to the wildflowers, plants, and shrubs of the understory and their important role in the life of the forest.

Life Under the Trees: Wildlife of the Understory. The forest understory is home to a diversity of wildlife ranging from salamanders to songbirds. Penn State's Dr. Margaret Brittingham will discuss the wildlife associated with the understory during different stages of forest suc-

cession from young forests to old growth. She will explain how people can and do influence this important resource directly and indirectly.

The Acid Test: Forest Plants and Soils Under Attack. Our forests are under siege from an insidious and silent enemy. Professor Bill Sharpe, of Penn State, will share with us the results of his extensive research into the effects of acid precipitation on forest health and regeneration.

Bambi's Legacy: Where Do We Go From Here? Dr. Gary Alt, head of the Pennsylvania Game Commission's special Deer Management Unit, will report the latest research on the region's most popular large mammal, the creature that presently has great impact on the understory. Famous for his groundbreaking research on the black bear, Gary brings the same scientific insight and drive to the deer program. He also will discuss new initiatives in the PGC's deer management programs.

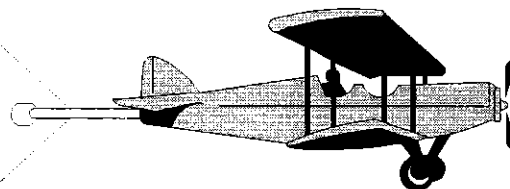
Panel Discussion. Speakers will form a panel of experts who will field questions from the attendees and one another as well. This is a chance to have your concerns and interests addressed.

The conference fee is \$15 for WOSA members and \$20 for nonmembers, if you register by March 15. A hot lunch is included. After March 15, or at the door (if accommodations permit), the fee is \$20 for WOSA members and \$25 for nonmembers. Mail your check, payable to WOSA, to:

Woodland Owners of the Southern Alleghenies
1482 Town Creek Rd.
Clearville, PA 15535

For more information call Don Morris at 458-2010 or Chris Gruitt at 458-3131. ❖

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 Juniata Valley Audubon.



The Joy of Tracking



we may not have had much snow this winter, but what we had was great for tracking.

One morning in late January I followed what I thought were coyote tracks all over the Far Field. I saw where the coyotes had sniffed at the bases of trees and poked their heads under blowdowns. Neither burrow I knew of had tracks going in and out, but above the trail the tracks converged beneath the roots of an uprooted tree. Many of the tracks were between two and two and a half inches long with distinctive toenail marks and heel pads — as coyote tracks are supposed to have.

Later, as we sat in the kitchen finishing lunch, I spotted what I thought was a red fox trotting down Sapsucker Ridge above the First Field.

“Get my binoculars, quick!” I asked Bruce and Dave as I kept my eyes on the moving animal.

Through my binoculars I could see that it was a large red fox. Unlike most red foxes, though, there was black along its back and tail as well as on its legs, which made it a cross red fox, according to a color photo in J. David Henry’s book, *Red Fox: The Catlike Canine*. Because of its size, I assumed it was a male. And since it was mating time for red foxes, I wondered if he was on the lookout for food or a mate or both?

As we watched from the veranda, he reached the edge of the field and sat down next to a large tree where he groomed his tail and chest before moving back up the slope into the thickets. After a few minutes, he reappeared, trotting along the side of the hill, behind a fallen log, and into thick brush near the power line right-of-way. That was the last we saw of him.

After less than an hour, I set out to track him. Following up the edge of the woods along the right-

of-way, he had crossed it about halfway up Sapsucker Ridge. On the other side he had sniffed around an uprooted tree before continuing into the Sapsucker Ridge woods and then back down into the grapevines and bittersweet bordering First Field. From there he had meandered along the edge of the field for a couple hundred feet before turning up the hillside into the woods.

By Marcia Bonta

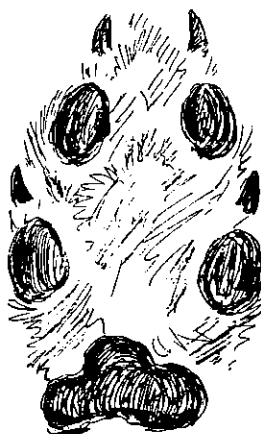
I stopped to rest at the base of a black cherry tree, realizing I hadn’t the energy of a lithe red fox. Still, his tracks had brought me to a part of the forest I rarely visit, so I enjoyed sitting there and looking around.

His tracks were as big as those I had seen at the Far Field, but because red foxes have a lot of hair growing on the bottoms of their feet, they were blurry and the toenail marks were not visible. But I could see his distinctive heel pads, which were shaped like an inverted V.

When I resumed my tracking, I discovered that halfway up the slope, he had turned left and continued straight ahead for several hundred feet before turning right and going up to the top of the ridge.

At the top he had headed toward the ephemeral ponds but then veered toward the top of First Field, staying well within the woods, even at the corner of the field beyond the spruce grove. There he had looked under an uprooted tree with a nice cavity below. Finally, he had turned left, putting his tracks precisely into the oval-shaped grooves made by porcupines that led into the spruce grove. There I lost his tracks in a maze of deer tracks. It was as if he had simply vanished.

Still, I had appreciated the chance to track him and learn a little about how he moved through the field and forest. And, unlike the tracking I had done at the Far Field, I had been privileged to know what the creature I was tracking looked like. ❖



... River of the Year / *Cont'd from first page* /

Juniata Clean Water Partnership to begin preparing a watershed plan. Two and a half years, twenty-six public meetings, and nearly 450 pages later, the Juniata became the largest watershed — at over 3,400 square miles — to have a completed Rivers Conservation Plan. Because of its current and future benefits to the watershed, the plan has prepared the way for both the watershed's placement on the Rivers Conservation Registry and DCNR's designation of the Juniata as River of the Year in 2001.

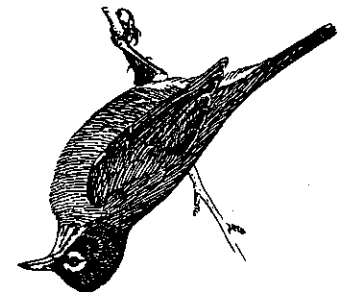
Upon learning of the Juniata River's selection as River of the Year, Jeffrey Kloss, Bedford County Planning Director and JCWP Chairman, said, "We are honored that the Juniata River has been recognized as Pennsylvania's River of the Year. Members

of the Juniata Clean Water Partnership have worked in concert with watershed residents for the past three years to plan for the protection and restoration of this valuable resource. Through the efforts of many concerned citizens, we expect the 'Blue Juniata' to remain a source of pride for our communities for years to come."

The headwaters of the Juniata are located on the eastern slopes of the Allegheny Ridge. More than one hundred miles later, the Juniata's journey ends, its waters joining those of the Susquehanna River as they flow toward the Chesapeake Bay.

To learn more about the Juniata Watershed Management Plan and the Juniata River Sojourn, phone the JCWP office at 627-5391 or visit < www.jcwp.org > on the World Wide Web. ❖

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



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

