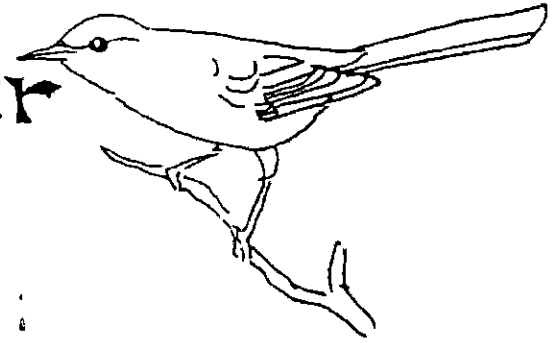


# The Gnatcatcher



## Newsletter of the Juniata Valley Audubon Society

P.O. Box 32, Tyrone, Pennsylvania 16686

Vol. 33, No. 5 — September 2001

### Canoe Creek Bats in National Spotlight

By Dr. Stan Kotala, JVAS Past President

**B**at researchers from across the United States recently gathered in Lexington, Kentucky to attend the Indiana Bat Symposium, where Pennsylvania Game Commission Wildlife Technician Cal Butchkoski presented a research paper titled "The Ecology of Indiana Bats Using a Building as a Maternity Site." The paper detailed the findings of Butchkoski and PGC Wildlife Diversity Supervisor Jerry Hassinger relating to their long-term research of Indiana bats in the Canoe Creek watershed.

Their research revealed the Canoe Creek watershed to be the most significant site in Pennsylvania for the Indiana bat, which is on the federal endangered species list. These endangered bats were found in the large hibernaculum on Moore's Hill, in the Turkey Valley Church (owned by the DCNR), and the "bat condo" built in the Canoe Creek floodplain in 1995 by Butchkoski.

"The condo, church, and Hartman Mine have been and will continue to be important components in our bat research," said Hassinger. "Their significance is still being measured, but we know full well that they're vital to bat populations in Pennsylvania's heartland. We also know they're some of our best bets to learn more about bats."

The use of telemetry also revealed that Indiana bats in the Canoe Creek watershed forage in large blocks of contiguous forest along streams. Summer maternity roosts typically are found under loose tree

[ *Cont'd on page 8* ]

#### — September Program —

##### "USING PLANTS TO ASSESS WETLAND HEALTH — A CASE STUDY FROM THE UPPER JUNIATA RIVER WATERSHED."

Sarah Miller, a research assistant with the Penn State Cooperative Wetlands Center, will detail her involvement in the Juniata Wetland Monitoring Project from June 1999 to the present. Highlights include plant identification training exercises, data collection efforts, how the data are presently being used to assess wetland conditions, and what the implications of this project are for wetlands in Pennsylvania as well as other areas of the country.

7 P.M., Tuesday, Sept. 18 in the chapel at Alto-Reste Cemetery, on Plank Rd., Altoona — across from Wal-Mart.  
(See page 2 for detailed directions.)

#### — September Field Trip —

**STONE MOUNTAIN HAWKWATCH.** View migrating raptors at a platform located on Stone Mountain at the Huntingdon-Mifflin County line. Trip leader is Dave Kyler (phone 643-6030).

9 A.M., Saturday, Sept. 22. Meet in the parking lot at McDonald's Restaurant on Rt. 22, Huntingdon. Bring binoculars, lunch, and sturdy shoes.

[ Rain date — Sunday, Sept. 23 ]

#### — Next Board Meeting —

Juniata Valley Audubon board members will meet at 7 P.M. at the Hoyer residence (Mt. Charma on Brush Mountain) Tuesday, Oct. 2. All Juniata Valley Audubon members are welcome. For directions, phone 684-7376 or send an e-mail message to <charma@nb.net>.

## The Gnatcatcher

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Juniata Valley Audubon 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 are held temporarily in the chapel at Alto-Reste Park Cemetery, Plank Road, Altoona (directly across from Wal-Mart) on the third Tuesday of the month in February, March, May, September, October, and November at 7 P.M. The public is invited to attend.

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## From the Gnatcatcher's Nest

Welcome to another great season of Audubon! More fine programs and field trips await your participation!

Please note, however, that our regular meeting location, the Visitor Center at Canoe Creek State Park, is undergoing extensive renovations and will not be available for the next several months. Juniata Valley Audubon Vice-President Cindy Moore has arranged to have our program meetings held temporarily in the chapel at Alto-Reste Park Cemetery, on Plank Road, Altoona. It's a large chapel that will work very nicely as a meeting room, and there are plenty of well-lit parking spaces.

Easy directions to the chapel are to take the Plank Road Exit of Interstate Rt. 99 (Exit 31) and go south toward Wal-Mart. The cemetery is directly across Plank Road from Wal-Mart. As you enter the parking lot, you'll see two buildings. We'll meet in the building on the left. (The building on the right is the funeral home.)

If you have any questions please phone Cindy after 5 P.M. at 946-9441 or e-mail her at <lmoore8227@aol.com>. Please don't contact the cemetery office for information.

Charlie

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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  
Alice Goodlin, Membership Chair  
R.R. 3, Box 127  
Altoona, PA 16601-9207

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 \_\_\_\_\_

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**CONSERVATION**
**ORNER**
*By Mark Henry*

*The following article by Tom Gibb appeared in the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette on Tuesday, Aug. 28, a week after the 3rd Circuit Court of Appeals in Philadelphia tossed out the I-99 lawsuit.*

## Environmental Group Weighs New Road Battle

A Pennsylvania Department of Transportation district engineer says he's convinced that his side has won.

But an official with an environmental coalition says the battle might well continue over whether legislative sleight-of-hand is allowing an interstate highway to be built in the State College area over what the coalition says is an environmentally sensitive stretch of mountainside.

The decision on whether to surrender or fight probably will come in the next two weeks, John Hanger, president of Citizens for Pennsylvania's Future, said yesterday [Aug. 27].

On Sept. 21, the 3rd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals upheld the portion of 1998 transportation legislation, authored by former Rep. Bud Shuster, R-Bedford County, who was then House Transportation Committee chairman, that allows a stretch of Interstate 99 to be built through southern Centre County without normal environmental reviews.

Hanger's group — the coalition known as Citizens for Pennsylvania's Future, PennFuture, for short — argued that the permission was contained in two sentences tucked into a 400-page bill, an illegal attempt to get the project in under the regulatory radar. Critics said building the highway along Bald Eagle Mountain instead of through the valley below — a route opposed by residents there — would rip a gash through environmentally fragile woodlands.

"Obviously, this route was picked by Congressman Shuster, in significant part," Hanger said.

Now, PennFuture and its allies — groups ranging from the local Bald Eagle Ridge Protection Association to the Pennsylvania Federation of

Sportsman's Clubs — have to decide whether to challenge the ruling in court.

Previous challenges have tested local patience but haven't delayed work, said George Khoury, district engineer for PennDOT's Clearfield-based District 2. Nor does he expect any future challenges to be successful, Khoury said.

As an alternative to fighting again in court, Hanger said, PennFuture could challenge individual permits or ask the next governor to give the project a fresh look. The next governor is due to be sworn in in 2003, the same year earth will be moved on the nine-mile stretch of highway that has become the battleground.

The job, which will finish a four-lane link from the Pennsylvania Turnpike at Bedford to Interstate 80 near State College, is to be finished in 2006 at a cost of \$360 million, \$15 million less than budgeted because builders have less work to do on the mountainside than originally anticipated, Khoury said.

♦ ♦ ♦

*I'm not asking Juniata Valley Audubon members to write letters (or anything else at this time), but my recommendation is to continue the fight through PennFuture at the state level. Although we may lose at the state level, PennDOT needs to learn that there are people out there that are sick and tired of their destruction of our resources and their manipulation of people for the sake of building more and more highways. PennFuture seems willing to continue the fight so I say, fight on!*

*PennFuture is considering our options and we should have a decision in the near future. ❖*

— Mark



**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.**

## Maryland Implements Noss Wilderness Recovery Plan

By Dr. Stan Kotala

A decade ago Dr. Reed Noss stated, "We have an opportunity unique to our generation: To halt mass extinction. In order to accomplish this feat, conservation must be practiced on a truly grand scale. Despite growing dangers of pollution, acid rain, toxic wastes, greenhouse effects, and ozone depletion, direct habitat alteration by humans remains the greatest of all threats to terrestrial and aquatic biodiversity." He went on to detail the methods whereby the principles of conservation biology could be applied to wilderness recovery — the establishment of core reserves connected by corridors.

The most important concept in this plan is the establishment of corridors. Dr. Noss said, "A fundamental principle for designing regional reserve systems is connectivity. Unless many millions of acres in size, individual core reserves will not be able to function alone as whole ecosystems in the sense of maintaining viable populations of large animals and ecological and evolutionary processes. In the long term, regions themselves must be functionally interconnected to allow for long-distance dispersal and migration in response to climate change. In order to maintain their ecological integrity, many or most core reserves will have to be functionally joined to other protected areas."

He envisioned these corridors as serving as linkages for seasonal movement, dispersal, and long-distance range shifts, as well as habitat.

Using Dr. Noss's Wilderness Recovery Plan as a guideline, Maryland has boldly moved to create a system of corridors linking large areas that are already protected and acting as core reserves. Called Green Print, it seeks to preserve 1.5 million acres of environmentally significant, undeveloped land in the Old Line State. Legislators have approved \$35 million in first-year funding for this ambitious project. Maryland Governor Parris Glendening intends to devote \$145 million to the program over the next five years.

The Maryland Department of Natural Resources seeks to secure these lands through direct acquisition and the purchase of conservation easements. It envisions the creation of "habitat highways" — stream valleys and mountain ridges that permit passage of wildlife through natural habitat, facilitate seed and pollen transport to help plant populations thrive, and keep streams and wetlands healthy by protecting adjacent natural areas.

We in Pennsylvania should do the same. The Commonwealth already has a good system of core reserves but lacks connecting corridors. Such connections are essential for the long-term well being of the Keystone State's flora and fauna. It's time for us also to take action. If you agree, write a note to Governor Tom Ridge, 225 Main Capitol Building, Harrisburg, PA 17120. Phone: (717) 787-2500; fax: (717) 787-8614.

Thanks! ❖

### No One Knows — By JACK CUPPER

A bullwhip saga, the story goes,  
Its dreadful ending no one knows.  
Little ones being beat to death,  
Earth's pieces looking for breath.

She said, "Hug me, with tender care,  
And you will be blessed with drink and air."  
We go on in greedy want and no bending,  
With wealth and no relenting.

King of the living, we see no wrong,  
Breaking cycles till the final gong.  
Tell me, how do I give this tender care?  
By wanting less and being fair.

A bullwhip saga, the story goes,  
When it will end no one knows.  
Life will stop when time runs out,  
And there's no more wealth for us to tout.

## A Cuckoo Summer

Cuckoos, both black-billed and yellow-billed, spend late spring and summer on our mountain. I often hear them calling, but I rarely see them through the curtain of tree leaves. This year I was lucky and not only saw them but watched behavior rarely witnessed — even by ornithologists.

The first encounter occurred on the Fourth of July. I was taking a new path, which we have named Pennyroyal Trail, around the Far Field. Already I had delighted in close-up views of a male indigo bunting and a great-crested flycatcher at the edge of the overgrown field. As I stood watching them in the midst of a locust grove, a yellow-billed cuckoo landed on a branch directly overhead. Slowly she pumped her tail up and down, flashing the white spots on the underside of her tail provocatively. I say “she” because suddenly another yellow-billed cuckoo landed briefly on top of her and then flew off.

I assumed they had mated although ornithologists claim that the male presents the female with a twig, which they hold together in their beaks as they mate. Then he leaves her with the twig and flies off and she joins him several minutes later. I saw no twig in her bill but she did fly off in the same direction after a short while. Maybe they were already paired and what I had seen was a “quickie” to strengthen the bond.

Despite what seemed a late mating, yellow-billed cuckoos do tend to mate and raise young as late as August, depending on an ample food supply of hairy caterpillars, and take a mere 17 days from egg-laying to the fledging of their offspring. And the overgrown Far Field is perfect yellow-billed cuckoo habitat.

Black-billed cuckoos are even more secretive than yellow-billed cuckoos as I discovered on July 30. After a hard morning rain, I went walking in early afternoon under an overcast sky. As I sat on Alan’s Bench overlooking First Field, I heard a

peculiar rattling, gurgling “ray-ray-ray” coming from the Norway spruce grove behind me. At first I ignored it, knowing how difficult it is to see any birds in the dense spruce branches. But the sound went on and on, and I finally tracked it to spruces encircling a small, open, grassy plot. Then I heard another, more deeply pitched rattle that sounded cuckoo-like.

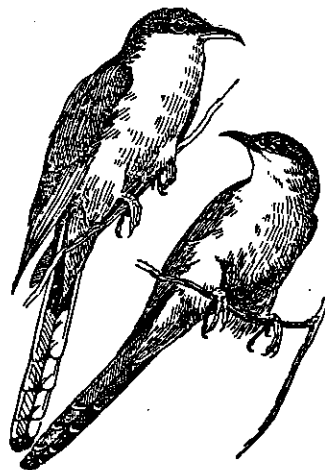
By Marcia Bonta

I sat down on the ground to listen and wait. After several minutes, I spotted the wriggling tail of a fledgling hidden in a spruce tree. The longer I sat, the bolder it got, poking out a beige-brown head and off-white face. Next I heard what sounded like the beginning of the “cu-cu-cu” black-billed cuckoo call.

An adult black-billed cuckoo landed next to the fledgling, and I easily saw its black bill and red eye ring. It had a caterpillar in its beak. Since both sexes look alike and both feed their young, I couldn’t tell if it was a male or female.

I think the adult spotted me even though I didn’t move, but it took it a long time to encourage its fledgling to move into deeper cover. Finally, it floundered downward, barely able to stay airborne. Like its congener, the yellow-billed cuckoo, black-billed cuckoos fledge at seven to nine days of age, leaving the nest and running along a supporting tree branch to meet adults returning with food. A day later, adults and young abandon the nest area. Since there was no sign of them in the grove the following day, I probably had watched a just-fledged youngster testing its wings. Because black-billed cuckoos are shyer than yellow-billed cuckoos, they prefer to live and breed in deep forest cover like our spruce grove and nearby deciduous woods.

For much of August I frequently heard the “cu-cu-cu” calling of black-billed cuckoos on Laurel Ridge, and I hoped they and the yellow-billed cuckoos were feasting on the heavy infestation of fall webworms. ❖



**... Canoe Creek Bats** [ *Cont'd from first page* ]

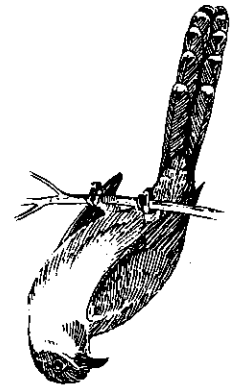
bark and also in cavities of large trees. Such sites are extremely susceptible to loss through logging. It is estimated that 30 percent of maternity roosts are lost annually to timbering.

Butchkoski also has documented the threat that U.S. Route 22 poses to Indiana bats in the Canoe Creek watershed. The flight paths of bats moving along Canoe Creek to the Frankstown Branch of the Juniata River are crossed by the highway. On average, an individual Indiana bat had crossed the highway eight times each night. Further research regarding this danger will be conducted next year.

Vern Ross, PGC Executive Director, has stated that "Canoe Creek has become one of America's most invaluable proving grounds for new bat conservation techniques. We're on the cutting edge and drawing considerable attention."

Because of the partnership among the PGC, the Bureau of State Parks, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, the Wild Resource Conservation Fund, and Bat Conservation International, conservation efforts for the endangered Indiana bats have taken a great leap forward right here in the heart of Juniata Valley Audubon country! ❖

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