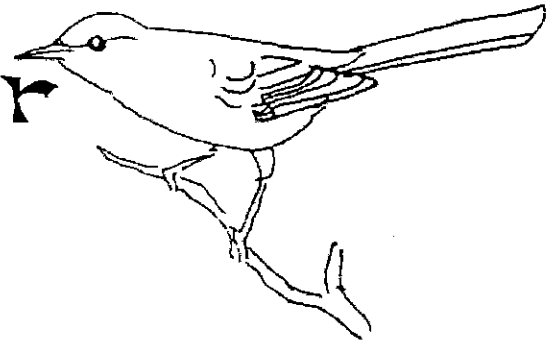


# The Gnatcatcher



## Newsletter of the Juniata Valley Audubon Society

P.O. Box 32, Tyrone, Pennsylvania 16686

Vol. 34, No. 4 – May/June 2002

### President Bush Honors Huntingdon Students For Environmental Achievements

#### Group Also Presented With 2002 JVAS Conservation Award

**T**hree Huntingdon Area Middle School (HAMS) students attended a reception in the White House Rose Garden and met President George W. Bush April 18 as part of the President's Environmental Youth Awards (PEYA) program.

Seventh graders Amy Slicker, Kaleigh Felisberto, and Margo Wilson, accompanied by their advisor, Frederic Wilson, attended a luncheon hosted by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for the thirty award-winners. The students completed a Standing Stone Creek preliminary watershed assessment that was selected as a national award-winner for EPA Region III in 2001.

"I want to thank so much the award-winners for turning idealism into action, for taking a great spirit and love of our country, and doing something about the spirit and love for our country," President Bush said. "You're showing other people that people can make a difference in people's lives. Stewardship is the calling of government, and it is the calling of every citizen. I hope in the years ahead that you'll never lose the idealism we honor today. Your communities need it and your country needs it."

Also accompanying the president was EPA Administrator Christie Whitman, who said that she is proud of the work being done by today's young people.

The girls' project focused on ascertaining the

[ Cont'd on page 4 ]

#### — May Program —

**"THE IMPORTANT BIRD AREA PROGRAM AND THE CONSERVATION OF PENNSYLVANIA'S BIRDLIFE."** Steve Hoffman, Audubon PA's director of bird conservation, will give an overview of Pennsylvania's unique contribution to bird populations in the Western Hemisphere, discuss long-term trends in populations, and summarize the most serious threats facing Pennsylvania's birds.

7 P.M. Tuesday, May 21 in the chapel at Alto-Reste Park, on Plank Rd., Altoona — directly across from Wal-Mart.

#### — May Field Trips —

**HERPETOLOGICAL ATLAS WORKSHOP AT CANOE CREEK STATE PARK.** A workshop of the PA Herpetological Atlas Project will be held by JVAS Board Member Dr. Stan Kotala, one of the atlas project's regional coordinators. A slide show covering all the reptiles and amphibians of the Juniata Valley will be presented. Following this, Stan will conduct a search for these critters along Mary Ann's Creek.

10 A.M. till noon, Saturday, May 18. To reserve a seat at the workshop (to be held in the Visitor Center), call CCSP at 696-6025.

**WARBLER WALK ON THE LOWER TRAIL.** Join JVAS Board Member Dave Kyler to take an early-morning walk on the Lower Trail to observe wood-warblers and other spring migrants. For more information, phone Dave at 643-3030.

7 A.M. Sunday, May 19. Meet at the Alfarata Trailhead, near Alexandria.

#### — June Picnic —

**JVAS PICNIC.** A season-ending, covered-dish picnic will be held at Pavilion No. 2 in Canoe Creek State Park. Bring your own eating utensils! Fellowship and a nature walk will highlight the evening. Please phone JVAS Membership Chair Alice Goodlin at 946-0150 and let her know what kind of victuals you're bringing.

6 P.M. Tuesday, June 18 at CCSP.

## The Gnatcatcher

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JUNIATA VALLEY AUDUBON  
Charlie Hoyer, Editor  
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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, 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

Another "season" of Audubon is history. I believe that it's been a good year, with many quality programs and field trips.

I also feel that JVASers "did their part" in contacting our legislators regarding conservation issues — especially on our opposition to oil drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

I'm pleased that through the efforts of Dr. Stan Kotala and Dave Kyler, Juniata Valley Audubon has "adopted" two Important Bird Areas: The Canoe Creek Watershed IBA and the Lower Trail IBA.

And the latest event — the recent revelation of the receipt of the "Anne Sloan Borland Endowment Fund for the Audubon Society" — means that one of my goals for the Chapter is fulfilled. I had always wanted to see the JVAS provide an annual scholarship to an environmental education summer camp for a deserving student. And I also had known that doing such would involve vexatious fund-raising endeavors. But now, Anne's generous donation will furnish us with an income to provide for such a scholarship in her memory. Thank you, Anne.

I hope to see many of you at our annual picnic at Canoe Creek State Park on June 18. If I don't, have a great summer, and I'll see you in September!

— 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  
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*
**DCNR Pilot Program Increases Horsepower Limits on Motorboats at Some State Parks**

If you enjoy "running around" in a motorboat and making a lot of waves and noise, then you'll be glad to know that the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) has announced a pilot program to increase motorboat horsepower limits in several state parks. The original proposal was for unlimited horsepower, but that has been changed to a maximum of 18. The current limit is 10 hp, and that seems to me to be enough for recreational activities on the lakes in the parks listed below.

Although the increase in the horsepower limit for motorboats is only a pilot program, it could be the forerunner of things to come, and it makes me "nervous." Many of us have witnessed large motorboats — or worse, personal watercraft — zooming around lakes making waves and noise and harassing wildlife. And wildlife has a tough enough time as it is without the additional stress of more powerful motorboats.

In fact, an article recently published in the journal *Conservation Biology* deals with this very subject. The article, "Buffer-zone distances to protect foraging and loafing waterbirds from disturbance by personal watercraft and outboard-powered boats,"<sup>1</sup> discusses flush distances for twenty-three species of birds at eleven sites in Florida.

The authors concluded their research by recommending that buffer zones of about 330 feet be established for shorebirds, 460 feet for terns and gulls, 490 feet for ospreys, and 590 feet for wading birds. They also cautioned that land/water managers would need to customize the buffer zones for individual sites and waterbirds because some species are more sensitive than others.

In my opinion, if these parks are going to allow larger motorboats, then each should establish liberal buffer zones and watch for any negative impacts on wildlife. Our wildlife resources are too valuable to

**JVAS Receives Endowment for Education**

It was the wish of the late Anne Borland, longtime JVAS board member, that a portion of her estate be given to the Juniata Valley Audubon Society.

Anne was a lover of the Audubon Society and of education. She wanted an endowment fund established in her name with the interest income derived each year to help defray newsletter expenses or to provide an environmental educational scholarship(s) to an Audubon youth summer camp for a deserving student(s) living in the JVAS membership region.

The generous amount of Anne's gift is ten thousand dollars (\$10,000), which has been deposited in a long-term money-market fund to gain maximum interest.

Anne died November 26, 2001. She was a member of the JVAS board of directors for more than twenty years. Over those years, she had served selflessly as secretary, hospitality chair, and fund-raising chair. We certainly have missed Anne at our Audubon meetings and field trips, but the Anne Sloan Borland Endowment Fund for the Audubon Society will keep her name in front of us forever and, concurrently, help provide for the continuing support of environmental education.

lose. If we wait to see if there are any negative impacts without establishing buffer zones, it could result in nesting failures and/or driving species elsewhere. And in many cases, there just aren't places for wildlife to go. So let's put the resource first, establish liberal buffer zones, control motorboat disturbances in sensitive areas, and objectively monitor any impacts the larger-sized motors may have on wildlife.

The state parks selected for this pilot program are Codorus SP, Maurice K. Goddard SP, Moraine SP, Nockamixon SP, Prince Gallitzin SP, and Yellow Creek SP. Pymatuning SP also was selected, but that will require joint legislative action on the part of both Pennsylvania and Ohio.

If JVAS members would like to comment on this horsepower pilot program, letters can be sent to Gary Smith, Chief, Park Operations and Maintenance, Bureau of State Parks, P.O. Box 8551, Harrisburg, PA 17105. ☾

1. Rodgers Jr., J.A., and S.T. Schwikert. 2002. Buffer-zone distances to protect foraging and loafing waterbirds from disturbance by personal watercraft and outboard-powered boats. *Conservation Biology* 16:216-224.

## ... Huntingdon Students Honored

[ *Cont'd from first page* ]

water quality of Standing Stone Creek and determining whether or not an environmental health issue exists that would prevent the stream from being Huntingdon's potable water supply or that would impact aquatic life.

One project from each of EPA's ten regions was selected. The projects were judged on their environmental need and appropriateness, accomplishment of goals, long-term benefit, positive impact, extent of youths' initiative, involvement of others, soundness of approach, clarity of presentation, and innovation.

Pennsylvania is part of EPA Region III, which also comprises Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, and Washington, D.C., with most of the Chesapeake Bay watershed within its domain.

Ongoing since 1971, the PEYA

program is the EPA's way of encouraging students enrolled in grades kindergarten through twelve to participate in a community project that has a positive environmental impact and recognizes young people across America for projects that demonstrate their commitment to the environment.

In recognition of their accomplishment, Wilson, Slicker, and Felisberto were presented a plaque and a certificate signed by President Bush.

Margo Wilson gave a five-minute presentation highlighting the project. To achieve their goal, Wilson said, "We collected biological, chemical, and physical data at four reference sites that provided the best picture of the watershed's dominant land use impacting its water quality: Forest, agriculture, and

residential development. We were responsible for obtaining partners, doing the fieldwork, collecting the data, writing the analysis document, and sharing our discoveries and recommendations with Huntingdon Borough Council and all our partners."

HAMS teacher Fred Wilson said, "The ultimate mastery of applying environmental literacy is students taking positive actions in resolving an ecological issue. Studying real-world environmental issues

that affect family and community not only makes learning more meaningful for the students, but it also promotes the dual concepts of citizenship and stewardship."

Wilson said that forming partnerships is the key to successful projects of this nature. The Standing Stone Creek project started in February 2000 with a student letter to Andy Patterson,



On behalf of the HAMS Environmental Club, seventh-grade students Lera Tsayukova and Sara Seiberling accept the 2002 JVAS Conservation Award from Conservation Chair Mark Henry.

manager, Huntingdon County Conservation District, requesting a partnership to complete a stream assessment. A coalition of the Huntingdon County Conservation District, Juniata College, Huntingdon Borough Council, the Juniata Clean Water Partnership, the Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts, the Juniata Clean Water Partnership, the DEP, the Huntingdon Water Treatment Plant, and the Huntingdon Area Middle School quickly formalized. A grant from the Pennsylvania League of Women Voters funded the project.

"Students are grateful that community authorities have accepted them as partners for community improvement enabling them to become learners and leaders," Wilson said.

Caitie Hanlon, an eleventh-grade high-school student, assisted with field-collecting data. Mentors to the students besides Wilson were Heather Galbraith, Juniata College intern, and Dr. Paula Martin, associate professor and chair, Environmental Science and Studies Department, Juniata College.

While the three students and Mr. Wilson were in Washington, D.C., his wife Theresa Wilson and seventh-grade students Lera Tsayukova and Sara Seiberling were on hand at the Annual Spring Banquet of Juniata Valley Audubon, in Bellwood, to receive the 2002 JVAS Conservation Award on behalf of the group. JVAS Conservation Chair Mark Henry presented a plaque.

Lera and Sara, as well as Margo, were involved in a Crooked Creek Watershed Assessment this school year. These students, along with Amy and Kaleigh, will start another watershed assessment project this spring.

For the past eleven years, HAMS students have been learning about watershed ecology in an integrated, interdisciplinary program called Science Teams in Rural Environments for Aquatic Management Studies (STREAMS). Students then go a step further and apply their ecological knowledge to resolving local environmental problems. ❧

— Adapted from an article in the Apr. 26, 2002 issue of *Update*, newsletter of the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection

### Red Eft Featured on New WRCF Patch

The Pennsylvania Wild Resource Conservation Fund (WRCF) has unveiled its new patch for 2002. The newest edition to the popular WRCF patch series features the red eft, the terrestrial sub-adult stage of the red-spotted newt.

The four-inch red eft patch costs \$5 and features brilliant, multi-colored embroidery. The proceeds from sales benefit the WRCF's work to protect Pennsylvania's natural heritage.

To order the patch, mail your check to Wild Resource Conservation Fund, P.O. Box 8764, Harrisburg, PA 17105-8764. There's a limit of ten patches per person. ❧

## JVAS Shaver's Creek Birding Cup Team Tallies 132 Species

### Takes County Cup

Gorgeous spring weather graced this year's Shaver's Creek Birding Cup, held from 9 P.M., Friday, May 3 to 9 P.M., Saturday, May 4.

Twelve teams from across central Pennsylvania competed to see the greatest number of bird species over this 24-hour period, raising money to support the work of the Shaver's Creek Environmental Center, central Pennsylvania's premier environmental education facility.

It marked the first year that Juniata Valley Audubon fielded a team for the event. Called the JVAS Gnatcatchers, our team consisted of Heidi & Roy Boyle, Drs. Alice & Stan Kotala, Helena Kotala, and Luis Moore.

The JVAS Gnatcatchers confined their birding to the Canoe Creek Watershed, which recently was designated as an Important Bird Area by the Pennsylvania Biological Survey. Relying on the diverse habitats present in the watershed, our team hoped to see at least 100 species in this 15,000-acre area. It proved to be a wise decision, as the forests, fields, and wetlands of this IBA yielded 132 species of birds for the JVAS Gnatcatchers.

At the end of the 24-hour count, teams gathered in Pine Grove Mills for the awards ceremony. To our delight, we found that our 132 species were enough to win us the County Cup, which is awarded to the team that sees the most species in a single county. It's even more significant when one considers that our birding was confined to one watershed, albeit an IBA.

Overall, the JVAS Gnatcatchers finished runner-up for the Birding Cup, behind the Pushed Off team, which saw 137 species, but visited several counties to do it.

We consider our initial foray into the Shaver's Creek Birding Cup competition to be a huge success and thank all JVAS members for their generous support! ❧

— Dr. Stan Kotala  
Team Captain

## Fools' Errand

**I**t was April 26 and Audubon's birthday, a perfect day to check on two great blue heron colonies for the Pennsylvania Game Commission. Every five years they conduct a statewide survey and use volunteers to monitor known colonies and find new ones.

I volunteered to check on the Rosecrans Bog Natural Area colony that we had last seen six years ago when we visited with the Native Plant Society. We also were asked to check on a more remote site in northern Clinton County called Lebo Run.

Following the directions to the bog in southern Clinton County that Bruce had written for my "Outbound Journeys" column in the now-defunct *PA WILDLIFE* magazine, Bruce, our son Dave, and I reached Cranberry Road shortly after 9 A.M. We were met by a gate and hostile signs posting the road as private property.

After consulting our DeLorme atlas, Bruce followed a maze of forest and back roads until he reached what appeared to be the closest access on foot — 1.8 miles. We didn't mind the hike, though, because it was a spectacular day, bathed in the pastel shades of emerging tree leaves that glowed in the bright sunlight. Along the trail we heard singing blackthroated green and black-and-white warblers, ruby-crowned kinglets, and blue-headed vireos and had a closeup view of a hermit thrush raising and lowering his rufous tail.

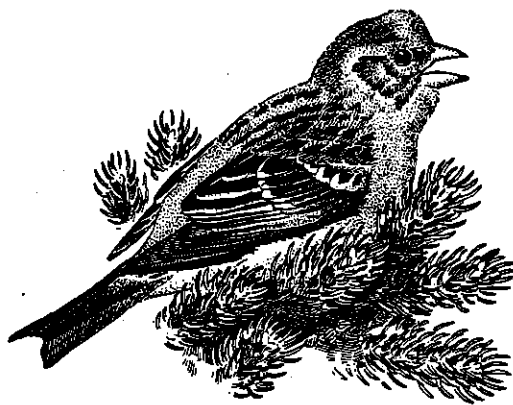
When we reached the bog, it looked almost the same as we remembered, surrounded by a mixed hemlock-hardwoods forest, the water punctuated by silvered tree snags. Those were the snags that had held the heron nests, but there were no nests and neither sight nor sound of any great blue herons. Even though Canada geese called and two pairs of

wood ducks took off, protesting loudly, a sad silence had fallen over the bog.

Oh well, I thought. Great blue herons do move, especially when their colonies are small and this one had had only eleven nests. We already were way behind schedule so we quickly walked the 1.8 miles back to our car.

By Marcia Bonta

The bigger adventure lay ahead. All we had was a point on a topographic map that Bruce had carefully measured and studied. After another hour in the car, we reached a rugged forest road. "Road closed 9.5 miles ahead, dead end," the sign warned. It also should have said "Four-wheel-drive access only." Luckily, we have such a vehicle and Bruce had calculated that the colony was 7.5 miles ahead.



So we pressed onward, creeping up a steep, narrow road with a several-hundred-foot dropoff and no guard rails. I spent my time staring in the opposite direction at the roadbank of long-spurred violets, spring beauties, wild geraniums, Canada mayflowers, mayapples, and mitre-

wort and hoping we would not meet an oncoming vehicle.

Finally, we reached the top of the mountain and drove for what seemed like miles, splashing through deepening potholes and trying to avoid the road crown that was too high even for our Pathfinder. The mostly hardwood forest had an understory of small hemlocks and white pines in some areas. Both shadbush and red elderberry bloomed along with red maple trees, and the dangling, golden catkins of black birch trees shimmered in the sunlight. Once we stopped to let a pair of ruffed grouse cross the road. Several times wild turkeys paraded past.

Then, off to our left, we noticed a recent logging, stoutly enclosed by solar-powered, five-strand,

electric fencing. Bruce, who had been pausing frequently to check his calculations against trail markings, suddenly stopped the car, pointed to the fenced area, and said, "It should be less than a quarter of a mile in that direction."

A sign on the fence instructed hunters to hold up the bottom strand with a stick and crawl under.

"We're hunters," Dave argued. "We're hunting for great blue herons." So he held the fence strand up for Bruce and me as we crawled under, bellies flat on the muddy ground, and we did the same for him. With compass in hand, Bruce led the way through a maze of green-leaved fire cherry and two-year-old white pine seedlings.

Once again the area was eerily silent.

"It'll stop you dead in your tracks," says John Matz, who lives near a great blue heron colony, of the loud cries of nesting herons.

All we heard was the sound of wind in the trees. We rolled under the fence on the far side and sent Dave to hike quickly in either direction in case Bruce had miscalculated. After half an hour Dave came back with a stiff neck and nothing more.

Glumly, we retraced our steps. I remembered that great blue heron colonies are protected only during their breeding period. Once the herons leave, in August, trees holding nests can be cut. That is probably what happened. After all, that colony had held only thirteen nests. Those herons, too, could have gone elsewhere even before the logging.

*Fools' errand*, I kept thinking as we drove those long, rugged miles back down the mountain. Once, though, a red bird flashed across in front of us. We stopped and were serenaded by a purple finch. He and all the other wild creatures and flowering plants we had seen that spectacular spring day had provided some solace for our failure to find a great blue heron colony. ❧

*To help: You can report any colonies you know of to Deb Siefken, Biological Aid, PGC, 1494 Mountain Road, Orrtanna, PA 17353 or send an e-mail her at <siefkend@cvn.net>. She can send you forms to fill out about colonies on both public and private land.*

## Ed Chair Assists with Envirothon

JVAS Education Chair Jody Wallace volunteered to participate in the 5th & 6th Grade Envirothon program provided by the Bedford County Conservation District. Held on May 8 at the Bedford Middle School, Jody taught environmental games to more than 100 pupils. She also talked on volunteerism involving students and made them aware of how we all intertwine with one another. The goal of the Envirothon is to cultivate a desire in students to learn more about our natural environment and help them understand the need for balance between the natural environment and our everyday lives. ❧

## Recruit New Members!

After you've read this issue of *The Gnatcatcher* from "cover to cover," please consider passing it on to a friend. Not only will you be helping to enlighten your friend, you may be recruiting a new member for National Audubon/Juniata Valley Audubon.

Upon completing the application on page 2 and sending it along with a check to me, I'll forward the application and dues to the national membership office. The JVAS will receive 100 percent of the first year's membership dues paid by the individual. This is part of the incentive plan Audubon has had this year to encourage recruitment at the local chapter level. With encouragement on your part, our chapter will benefit by having more funds available for programs, and our circle of friends will continue to grow.

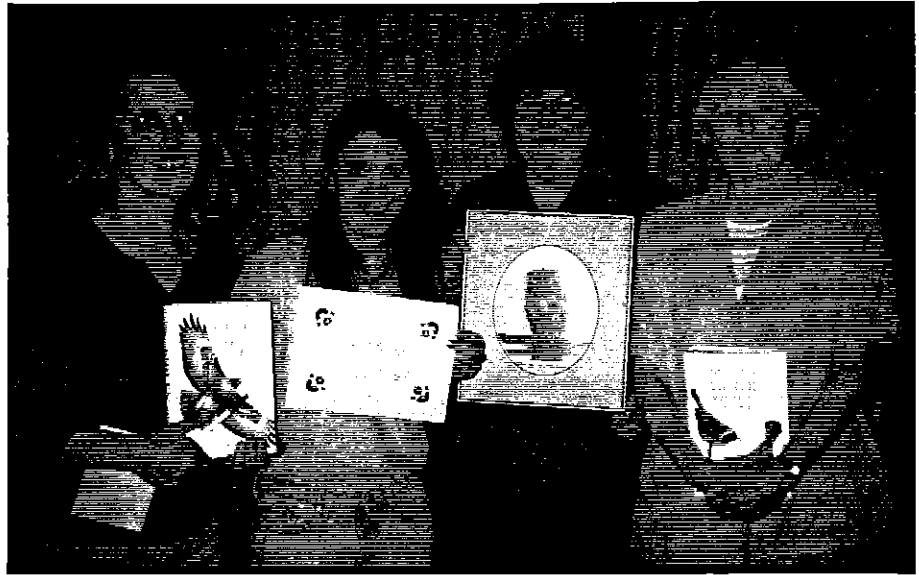
The National Audubon Society, founded in 1905 is supported by 600,000 members in more than 500 chapters throughout the Americas. The mission of Audubon is to conserve and restore natural ecosystems, focusing on birds and other wildlife and their habitats, for the benefit of humanity and the Earth's biological diversity.

Please invite a friend to our next meeting and encourage them to become a member of a truly dynamic group! ❧

— Alice Goodlin  
JVAS Membership Chair

The drawing for the JVAS "Bird-watcher's Adventure" raffle, conducted by Jody Wallace at last month's JVAS Annual Spring Banquet, resulted in the following winners:

**FIRST PRIZE**, rent-free week at a furnished bayside Ocean City, Md. townhouse — Maureen Gromiller, of Hollidaysburg. **SECOND PRIZE**, framed prize-winning photo of a wet screech-owl — Janet Huber, of Altoona. **THIRD PRIZE**, book, *The Sibley Guide to Bird Life & Behavior* — Emmy Lou Gooch, of Huntingdon. **FOURTH PRIZE**, book, *The Sibley Guide to Birds* — N. Keslosky, of Ocean City, Md. **FIFTH PRIZE**, book, *The Sibley Guide to Birds* — Maxine Leckvarcik, of Petersburg.



*From left, Jody Wallace, Maureen Gromiller, Janet Huber, Emmy Lou Gooch*

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