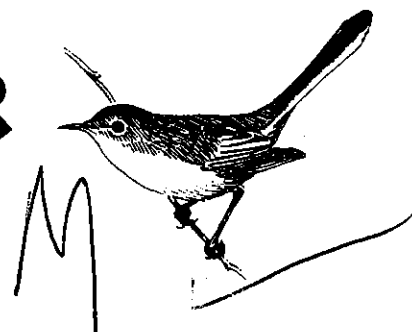


THE GNATCATCHER

Newsletter of Juniata Valley Audubon

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JVAS GNATCATCHERS RETAKE COUNTY CUP

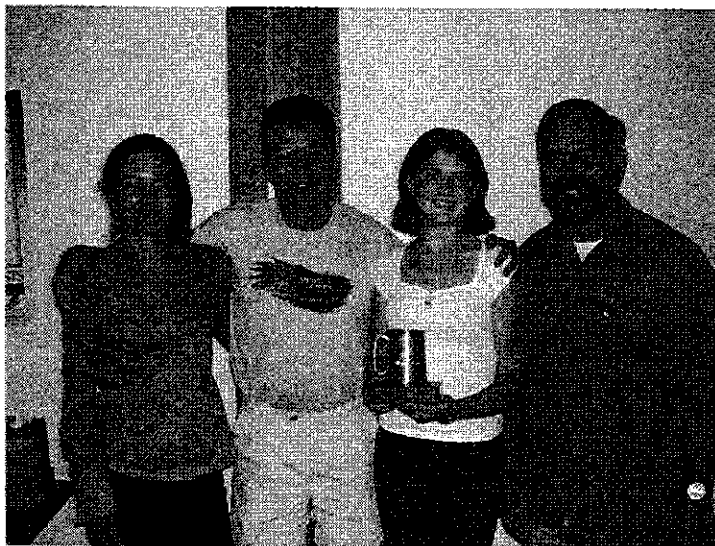
The Shaver's Creek Birding Cup is 24 hours of competition between teams of birders trying to see the most birds to raise money for the Shaver's Creek Environmental Center, central Pennsylvania's premiere environmental education facility. Teams compete for either the Birding Cup, in which case they travel across several central Pennsylvania counties searching for the most species, or the County Cup, in which case the teams are confined to a single county.

This year's County Cup was won by our chapter team, the JVAS Gnatcatchers (consisting of Helena, Alice, and Stan Kotala, and Luis Moore) who saw 116 species of birds in Blair County (specifically in the Canoe Creek Watershed Important Bird Area), placing them in a tie with the Huntingdon Hawkeyes, who saw 116 species in Huntingdon County. The JVAS Gnatcatchers finished in fourth place in 2003 with 111 species and first place in 2002 with 132 species (all in the Canoe Creek Watershed IBA). The Birding Cup was won by the Common Loons, a team consisting of regionally-acclaimed birders, including Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas Project Assistant Coordinator Mike Lanzone.

Thanks to the generosity of donors, this year's competition brought in more than \$10,000 for the Shaver's Creek Environmental Center. This money will be used to support the more than 200 educational programs presented to schools each year by the Center, the training of environmental education interns, the saw-whet owl banding program, the Tussey Mountain Golden Eagle Watch, and summer camps for elementary, junior high, and high school students. Many thanks to the JVAS members who contributed to this fund-raising effort!

--Stan Kotala

Special thanks to the JVAS members who made donations to Shaver's Creek Environmental Center on behalf of the JVAS Gnatcatchers Birding Cup team: **Alice Fleischer, Charlie and Marge Hoyer, David and Maxine Leckvarcik, Stan, Alice, Helena, and Elizabeth Kotala, Luis and Cindy Moore, and Al and Beryl Sternagle.**



The JVAS Gnatcatchers team consisting of L-R: Alice Kotala, Stan Kotala, Helena Kotala, and Luis Moore.

NORTH AMERICAN MIGRATION COUNT RESULTS

The North American Migration Count, a twenty-four hour continent-wide bird census, took place on Saturday, May 8th. Juniata Valley Audubon coordinated the Blair County census and hosted an International Migratory Bird Day celebration at Canoe Creek State Park on that day.

More than two-dozen birders joined JVAS members in their survey of the Canoe Creek watershed and more than a dozen others submitted data from across Blair County. This year 126 species of birds were seen in Blair County during the North American Migration Count. Many thanks to all the JVAS members who helped to make this day a tremendous success: Warren Baker, Dave and Marcia Bonta, Heidi and Roy Boyle, Alice Fleischer, Dave and Nancy Foor, Alice Goodlin, Dwight Kennedy, Alice and Helena Kotala, Mabel Michael, Cindy and Luis Moore, Mary Paoli, Al and Beryl Sternagle, Russ Wade, and Cheryl and Bob Washburn.



Two dozen birders joined JVAS members at Canoe Creek State Park on Saturday, May 8 for the North American Migration Count/ International Migratory Bird Day festivities.

Come to the JVAS Picnic!

Where: Canoe Creek State Park Pavilion # 2

When: Tuesday, June 29 at 6 PM

Why: To have fun; make new friends; socialize with JVAS members; enjoy nature; learn from other birding, wildlife, and wildflower enthusiasts; go on a guided bird walk; go on a guided wildflower walk.

Bring a covered dish. Call JVAS president Cindy Moore at 946-9441 to let her know you are coming.

BE THERE OR BE SQUARE!!

CANOE CREEK STATE PARK TO HOST BAT FESTIVAL

The fourth annual bat festival will be held at Canoe Creek State Park on **Saturday, August 14th**. Featuring displays, exhibits, demonstrations, field trips, and renowned speakers, the bat festival draws several hundred visitors each year.

Canoe Creek State Park is the center of bat research in Pennsylvania. The Canoe Creek watershed is home to the largest colony of Indiana bats in the Keystone State. The Indiana bat is a federally endangered species, with most colonies confined to the Mississippi valley. The threatened small-footed bat and long-eared bat also call the Canoe Creek area home. The Turkey Valley Church, a part of Canoe Creek State Park, is the site of the largest maternity colony of little brown bats east of the Mississippi River (23,000 bats). One of the Commonwealth's largest bat hibernacula is on Moore's Hill in Canoe Creek State Park (>20,000 bats).

Nine species of bats live in the Canoe Creek watershed: the little brown bat, the long-eared bat, the Indiana bat, the small-footed bat, the eastern pipistrelle, and the big brown bat which spend the winter in local caves and mines and summer in the surrounding forests, and the red bat, the hoary bat, and the silver-haired bat, which summer in the Canoe Creek area but migrate south for the winter. In recognition of the Canoe Creek watershed's importance to bats and other mammals, the Pennsylvania Biological Survey has designated the Canoe Creek Important Mammal Area, a 50,000 acre region where mammal conservation projects will be concentrated.

The Canoe Creek Bat Festival will feature the following choices of programs:

- 2:00pm-3:00 pm: **CAVES AND CRAFTS:** Ann Molosky of Lincoln Caverns will teach you about caves and will guide you through making a cave model for you to take home. **MEET AT THE CANOE CREEK STATE PARK VISITOR/EDUCATION CENTER BASEMENT.**
- 2:00pm-3:00pm: **TRACKING BATS WITH TELEMETRY:** Wildlife technicians from the Pennsylvania Game Commission will teach you to track bat using telemetry. **MEET AT THE CANOE CREEK STATE PARK VISITOR/EDUCATION CENTER PARKING LOT.**
- 3:15pm-4:15pm: **THE INDIANA BAT:** Representatives from the Pennsylvania Game Commission will discuss the ecology of the Indiana bat, an endangered species living in the Canoe Creek watershed. **MEET AT THE CANOE CREEK STATE PARK VISITOR/EDUCATION CENTER BASEMENT.**
- 3:15pm-4:15pm: **BAT GAMES FOR KIDS:** Environmental Education Specialist Beth Garner will use games and fun to teach you about bats. **MEET AT THE CANOE CREEK STATE PARK AMPHITHEATER (just below the visitor/education center).**
- 4:30pm-5:30pm: **TAKING CARE OF BATS:** Wildlife rehabilitator Robyn Graboski will discuss caring for injured wildlife, especially bats. **MEET AT THE CANOE CREEK STATE PARK VISITOR/EDUCATION CENTER BASEMENT.**
- 4:30pm-5:30pm: **HIKE TO THE BAT MINE:** Environmental Education Specialist Michelle Shetler will guide you on a hike to the large bat hibernaculum on Moore's Hill. Be prepared for a mile-long uphill hike (but it's all downhill after that!). **MEET AT THE CANOE CREEK STATE PARK VISITOR/EDUCATION CENTER PARKING LOT.**
- 7:30pm-9:00pm: **MIST NETTING FOR BATS:** Bat researchers Carolyn Itle and Shylah Mellon will demonstrate how they catch bats using a mist net. Bring a flashlight! **MEET AT PAVILION #1 FOR A WALK TO THE BAT CONDO.**
- 7:30pm-9:00pm: **AN EVENING AT THE BAT CHURCH:** JVAS Conservation Chair Dr. Stan Kotala will lead you on a short walk to the bat church, where you'll see 20,000 bats emerge for an evening of feeding on insects. Bring a flashlight! **MEET AT PAVILION #1 FOR A WALK TO THE BAT CHURCH.**

If you have any questions about the Canoe Creek Bat Festival, please call Environmental Education Specialist Heidi Boyle at 695-6807 or JVAS conservation chair Stan Kotala at 946-8840.

GOVERNOR RENDELL PROPOSES FOREST PLAN

Governor Ed Rendell has proposed funding for private landowners to protect their forests through a voluntary easement program as part of his 2004-05 budget. The program would be managed by the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, which oversees Pennsylvania's 2.1 million acres of state forest land.

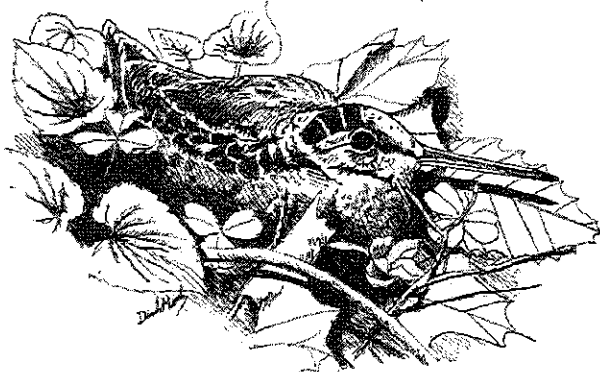
"The future of our forests depends upon the public and private sectors managing forests in a sustainable way," Governor Rendell said. "Extending this voluntary land-conservation effort to our private forests will ensure that these lands remain wooded, giving our timber companies a sustainable source of Pennsylvania wood, helping to stabilize our \$5 billion forest-products industry, and infusing life into the local economies."

Under the Governor's program, DCNR would target easement funds in areas that protect water supplies, create more public recreation access, and conserve wildlife corridors, with an overall goal of protecting forests. "This state has more than 500,000 private forest landowners who own about 75 percent of the Commonwealth's forestland," Governor Rendell said. "The state's ability to supply high-quality hardwoods, protect plant and animal species and to maintain or improve water quality is dependent upon these landowners. We must continue to provide them with the necessary tools to ensure our working forests remain productive."

The Governor's forest-easement plan is part of an overall proposal to renew and expand the state's Growing Greener program and includes an \$800 million voter-approved bond issue that would be distributed among three areas over four years:

- \$330 million for parks, farmland and open space, including forest easements.
- \$300 million for environmental cleanup.
- \$170 million to revitalize communities.

Debt service on the bonds would be funded by fees on waste disposal and on toxic waste emissions. The JVAS strongly supports the governor's environmental bond proposal.



American Woodcock
by JVAS member
Dick Mock

"Give me health and a day, and I will make the pomp of emperors ridiculous."

-Ralph Waldo Emerson

DELMARVA TRIP 2004

On April 24-26, 2004, JVAS members embarked on a field trip to the Delmarva Peninsula. A total of 128 species were seen on the three-day Birding Bonanza. Some of the more notable species include the American oystercatcher, northern gannet, clapper rail, boat-tailed grackle, prothonotary warbler, harlequin duck, brant, peregrine falcon, short-billed dowitcher, purple sandpiper, ruddy turnstone, great black-backed gull, royal tern, brown-headed nuthatch, and black skimmer. Trip participants included Dave and Trudy Kyler, Stan, Alice, Elizabeth, and Helena Kotala, Terry and Debbie Wentz, and Dick Mock.



JVAS members observe birds at Bombay Hook National Wildlife Refuge. Left to right: Terry Wentz, Helena Kotala, and Dave Kyler.



Debbie Wentz smiles at a large flock of sandpipers while Terry Wentz and Dick Mock look on.



The American oystercatcher, one of the many great birds seen on the trip.



JVAS members enjoy various species of birds during the field trip to the Delmarva Peninsula. Left to right: Stan Kotala, Alice Kotala, Dick Mock, Terry Wentz, and Trudy Kyler.



Alice Kotala looks intently through the scope as she tries to identify a mystery bird.

The Wonder of Things Unknown

By Heidi Boyle

Spring and summer at Canoe Creek are always a blur of school buses and minivans bringing herds of school kids. Frazzled parents with first aid kits, bug spray and peanut-butter and jelly sandwiches follow the groups as we hike through fields and woods, wade through streams, look for insects, talk about unique animal adaptations, and investigate the diversity of life.

Although these direct experiences in nature hopefully provide some lasting memories of the outdoors for the many students, one group this May certainly went home with an extra gift that opened eyes and minds on a cool, Wednesday morning.

A small group of 4th graders walked with me through the long grasses of the field. We were on our way to the stream to look at macroinvertebrates and investigate stream health. The kids were chattering among themselves, when a few raucous shrieks suddenly pierced the relative calm of the cool morning. One child (in shorts) had just been slimed! Suddenly, mass panic broke out as kids whipped their heads wildly about, seeing the masses of spit clinging to plants. There was no escape. As far as the eye could see, these disgusting blobs decorated the plants of the field in every direction.

After employing my handy "playground voice," and gathering the kids around the scene of the slime, I began the debriefing. First, we figured that the spit could not have possibly been the result of a careless park visitor, as the "spitwads" were too numerous; it must be a natural phenomenon. Then we began to predict what could make spit (plant or animal?). Next, we figured out the survival needs of animals and began to break down the reasons for an animal to create a wad of spit.

As I spoke with the group, I crouched among the grasses to get a little "spit" on my pants – a few kids drew sudden breaths in shock. "How can you touch that stuff? Isn't that gross?" I explained that this stuff represented an amazing adaptation for survival, and invited them to take a closer look. When the kids began kneeling down and straining to see the spit ball on the plant I was holding, they were ready for the next step.

I asked if we should take a look, and the kids nodded emphatically! I wiped the spit away to reveal a small, green spittlebug. Using a magnifier, I walked around with the tiny creature so the kids could take a close-up look. Devoid of its spit, the creature now looked quite harmless and the kids laughed in relief. The green, ¼" insect, something akin to a leafhopper, was an instant success. Even the teacher lost the look of disgust on her face (after lunch, I even caught her showing spittle bugs to other students!) and leaned in for a closer look.

Imagine the power of an open mind – imagine what a difference it could make if kids were taught to collect, analyze and evaluate information before automatically slapping a judgment and reaction on a situation! That sense of curiosity and willingness is an all-important gateway, a first step into true nature exploration. Rachel Carson said it best in **The Sense of Wonder** (1965):

"If facts are the seeds that later produce knowledge and wisdom, then the emotions and the impressions of the senses are the fertile soil in which the seeds must grow. The years of childhood are the time to prepare the soil."

After our initial look at a spittle bug, we took a ten minute break out of the schedule and spent the time on our knees, uncovering spittle bugs all over the field. The kids looked for predatory insects on the plants and made observations of insect behavior. It was certainly rewarding to see the students handle with care the tiny Homoptera, which only a few minutes before they were willing to destroy.

When the kids gathered again, they discussed the function of the spittle – the bugs hide in their spittle from predators. The spittle also protects against moisture loss and acts as thermal control, helping to insulate the spittle bug from heat and cold. And, of course, finding out that the spittle bug secretes the liquid goo from its anus and whips it into froth was a fact that firmly established the bug as an animal to be respected!

That chance "sliming incident" happily brought the students full circle from being passive participants in a school activity to being true naturalists and active explorers. At the stream study station, the students took extra time and care with magnifiers to investigate the macroinvertebrates they had caught. Eyes widened as mayfly

nymphs rippled stream water through their external gills in order to capture oxygen from the water. Several girls were fascinated to see caddisfly nymphs walking around with little homes of stone protecting their abdomens. One group of students crowded around me and wanted to know why a flat scale on a stream rock was crawling! Close examination revealed the underside of the "scale" to have legs – it was a water penny, or beetle larva!

From crayfish to hellgrammites, a diversity of survival skills was revealed under their magnifiers. The students became active seekers of their own experiences and were in turn awed by the hidden wonders that crawled and fluttered just under their fingertips.

That Wednesday morning was one of the most rewarding days of teaching and exploring nature. The students had been visited by a sense of wonder, once given the opportunity to lose their fear of the unknown. I was immensely gratified when, as we left the stream, a newly emerged and very scary-looking adult sphinx moth was found crawling on my backpack. I waited, holding my breath, to see what the students would do. I was rewarded when the students quietly and quickly shared the experience, pointing at the alien-like creature with wrinkled wings. The wonder in their wide eyes was a powerful gift that just might keep their minds open to discovery.

"Hands-on experience at the critical time, not systematic knowledge, is what counts in the making of a naturalist. Better to be an untutored savage for a while, not to know the names or anatomical detail. Better to spend long stretches of time just searching and dreaming."

-E.O. Wilson, **The Naturalist**

President's Message

Summer is almost upon us and everyone is very busy, but I'm hoping you can take one evening to spend with your fellow birders. **JVAS' annual picnic** is scheduled for **Tuesday, June 29th at Canoe Creek State Park's Pavilion 2 at 6:00pm**. Come for dinner and then join us for a short (easy) walk to look at wildflowers and birds, and any other wildlife that may be around. Everyone is asked to bring a covered dish to share and their own place settings. It's a good way to kick off the summer and have a great meal! No reservations are required, but call to let me know what covered dish you will be bringing!

Hope to see you there!



-Cindy Moore

JVAS members Frank Kovaloski and John Fischer report that ravens have been nesting on the Juniata Car Shops in Altoona for several years now. Here is a photo of one returning to the nest. Photo by John Fischer.

JVAS OPPOSES SALE OF ALTOONA CITY AUTHORITY WATERSHED LANDS

The Altoona City Authority (ACA) reservoir system and surrounding ACA lands provide numerous benefits to Blair County, including the provision of high quality water to customers in twelve municipalities, open space preservation, scenic vistas, carbon sequestration (very important in areas with high levels of motorized traffic, such as Logan Valley), habitat for wildlife, and opportunities for healthful non-motorized recreation, all leading to an improved quality of life for local residents. The Altoona City Authority system serves more than 25,000 customers and has the capacity to produce 28 million gallons of high quality water daily. It controls seven water treatment facilities, 13 reservoirs with a combined capacity of close to 3 billion gallons, one well field, 16 storage tanks, and a 400 mile water distribution system. The most important asset with respect to water quality, however, is the 42,682 acres of watershed land owned by the ACA, the City of Altoona, and numerous private landowners. 95.28%, or 40,667.8 acres of the ACA Reservoir Watersheds are forested. It is the most extensive reservoir system in the Commonwealth. Almost 25% of these watersheds are owned by the Altoona City Authority and the City of Altoona.

One of the ACA properties, Kettle Reservoir, is in the Bald Eagle Ridge Important Bird Area, which was designated by the Pennsylvania Biological Survey in 1996. The IBA program was begun by BirdLife International in 1985 to recognize sites that are of global significance to bird populations. In Pennsylvania, this program is administered jointly by the Pennsylvania Biological Survey and Audubon Pennsylvania. The Bald Eagle Ridge IBA extends along Bald Eagle Mountain from Williamsport to Tyrone and along Brush Mountain from Tyrone to Frankstown.

All the other ACA reservoirs are along the Allegheny Front, which is currently being reviewed for IBA status. The Allegheny Front represents a massive block of unbroken forest extending from Williamsport to the Maryland line. It is home to numerous bird species that are more characteristic of northern forests, such as the Canada warbler, the hermit thrush, the yellow-bellied sapsucker, the black-throated blue warbler, the white-throated sparrow, the blue-headed vireo and the olive-sided flycatcher. Juniata Valley Audubon and Allegheny Plateau Audubon members certainly believe that the Allegheny Front, including all ACA reservoir lands, merits IBA designation.

JVAS members have documented 178 species of birds using land owned by the ACA and the City of Altoona in the reservoir watersheds. 100 species nest in these watersheds. Fourteen bird species of special concern have been observed on these lands.

Numerous scientific studies have shown that intact forest ecosystems are the source of the highest quality water. This was recognized by the State of New York more than a hundred years ago and was the justification for that state's purchase of the 304,000 acre Catskill Forest Preserve and the 2.4 million acre Adirondack Forest Preserve (which is larger than Yellowstone National Park). Article XIV of the New York State Constitution specifically decrees that these Forest Preserves cannot "be leased, sold, or exchanged...nor shall the timber thereon be sold, removed, or destroyed." The severe degradation in water quality following the logging orgy of the nineteenth century was also the reason for the creation of Pennsylvania's 2.1 million acre state forest system. More recently, in the 1990s, the City of New York chose to purchase lands in its reservoir watersheds in order to preserve them in their natural state because this was a more cost-effective and efficient way of assuring high quality water than continual water treatment plant upgrades.

Members of the Altoona City Council have formed a Privatization Task Force to investigate selling the Altoona City Authority reservoir system and watershed lands to a private entity. Juniata Valley Audubon is opposed to this because of the uncertain future that this represents for the extensive forests which surround the reservoir watersheds.

The Altoona City Authority has been a good steward of these lands, which represent some of the best wildlife habitat in Blair County. It is essential that they remain in their natural state so that wildlife habitat is preserved and high water quality is ensured. 95% of the land in the watersheds of the ACA reservoirs is forested. The gold standard for the production of the highest quality water is an undisturbed forested watershed. Disturbances which negatively affect water quality include particulate and chemical contamination from businesses, residences, and roads, as well as from extractive activities such as mining, oil and gas drilling, and inappropriate timbering.

At a Privatization Task Force meeting on May 19th, Juniata Valley Audubon expressed concern that the sale of the ACA reservoir system to a private entity may result in that entity selling these lands for development, thus reducing forested cover in the watersheds. Development of these lands would result in increased chemical and particulate pollution from the runoff of pesticides, herbicides, gasoline, oil, road salt, septic effluent and sediment. Development of these lands would destroy some of Blair County's finest wildlife habitat. An article in Altoona Mirror about the proposed sale quoted JVAS Conservation Chair Dr. Stan Kotala: "The watersheds quietly perform an invaluable service of preserving the water's purity, as illustrated by New York City's willingness to buy land in its watersheds to avoid the more costly alternative of upgrading treatment to remove contaminants resulting from development." An asset of such value should never be put at risk. If you are interested in helping to save these lands, please contact Conservation Chair Dr. Stan Kotala at 946-8840. Thanks for your help!

-Stan Kotala, JVAS Conservation Chair

JOIN JUNIATA VALLEY AUDUBON!

Juniata Valley Audubon membership provides you with the following benefits:

- Notification of Juniata Valley Audubon's exciting activities including monthly nature programs, field trips, and other events
- Subscription to the bimonthly chapter newsletter *The Gnatcatcher*.
- Opportunity to participate in local advocacy efforts to help make a real difference.
- Opportunity to aid in the preservation of the natural world.
- Opportunity to have fun in joining with fellow nature enthusiasts. **Make your check payable to JVAS.**
- **Become a chapter-only member:** ___ Individual—\$15
___ Family—\$20
___ Supporting—\$35
___ Friend of JVAS—\$50



Juniata Valley Audubon Life Membership provides you with all the benefits listed above along with special recognition in *The Gnatcatcher*. **Become a primary supporter of the JVAS' mission of education and advocacy for a once-in-a-lifetime fee of \$500. Make your check payable to Juniata Valley Audubon.**

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Mail the completed form to JVAS, P.O. Box 32, Tyrone, PA 16686

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NAMC Coordinator...Dr. Stan Kotala (see above)

PROGRAMS

JUNE FIELD TRIP

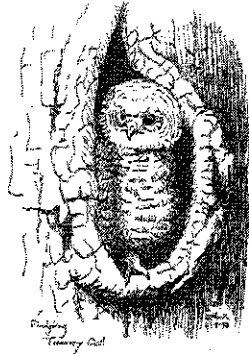
NO PROGRAM MEETINGS UNTIL SEPTEMBER

ABOUT JVAS PROGRAMS: Programs are presented on the third Tuesday of each month. They begin at 7 PM in the chapel at Alto-Reste Park on Plank Road, Altoona. Our programs are designed for a general audience, and are free and open to the public.

June 29, 2004

JVAS Picnic at Canoe Creek State Park

Our annual picnic will be held at CCSP on this Tuesday evening followed by a nature walk to observe birds, flowers, and aquatic stream life. Potluck supper to begin at 6 PM. Contact Cindy Moore at 946-9441 for details.



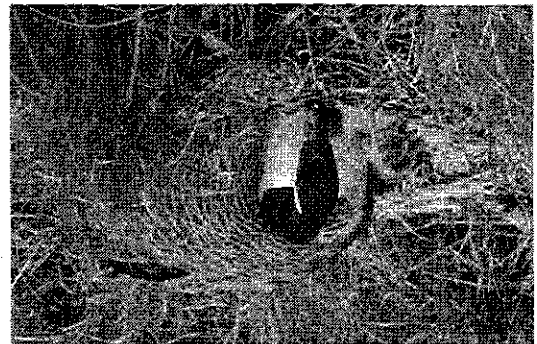
Fledgling Tawny Owl
by
JVAS member
Dick Mock

Printed by Wick Copy Center

Marcia Bonta
P.O. Box 68
Tyrone, PA 16686-0068

Exp: 7/1/05

Canada Goose and goslings at Canoe Creek State Park by Dusky Rhodes.



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