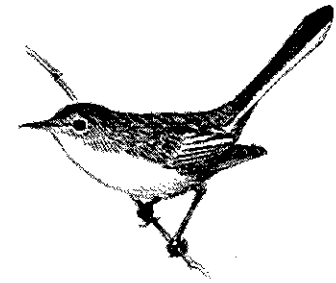


THE GNATCATCHER

Newsletter of Juniata Valley Audubon

Vol. 38 No. 3 — May/Jun 2006

www.juniatavalleyaudubon.org



Juniata Valley Audubon against proposed Brush Mountain "Windfarm"

Wind energy companies have proposed the construction of a wind energy facility on Brush Mountain in Logan, Frankstown and Tyrone Townships, Blair County. Juniata Valley Audubon is opposed to an industrial windplant, also known as a "windfarm," on Brush Mountain because a windfarm at this location would violate US Fish and Wildlife Service guidelines regarding windplant siting which state;

1. **Avoid placing turbines in areas where there are endangered species.** (The area surrounded by Brush Mountain, Canoe Mountain, Lock Mountain, and Loop Mountain is home to the largest Indiana bat colony in Pennsylvania. The Indiana bat is the only Federally Endangered mammal in Pennsylvania. Every windfarm that has been located on a forested ridgetop has devastated bat populations.)
2. **Avoid placing turbines in bird migration pathways.** (Brush Mountain is part of the Bald Eagle Ridge Important Bird Area, so designated by the Pennsylvania Biological Survey in 1996 because it is a major migratory route for raptors, especially golden eagles and bald eagles.)
3. **Avoid placing turbines near known bat hibernation, breeding, and maternity colonies.** (The area surrounded by Brush Mountain, Canoe Mountain, Lock Mountain, and Loop Mountain is home to the largest maternity colony of little brown bats in Pennsylvania (20,000+) and is the hibernation site for 25,000 bats of 6 species, including the Federally Endangered Indiana bat and the Threatened small-footed bat. Pennsylvania's only breeding colony of the Federally Endangered Indiana bat also is located in this area. In 2002 Brush Mountain was designated as part of the Canoe Creek Important Mammal Area because of its significance to bat populations.)
4. **Avoid fragmenting large, contiguous tracts of wildlife habitat.** (Brush Mountain was designated as a Landscape Conservation Area in the Blair County Natural Heritage Inventory done under the direction of the Blair County Planning Commission because it represents a large contiguous tract of forested wildlife habitat.)

Unfortunately, these guidelines are voluntary and the wind industry obviously is ignoring them. In addition to its harmful effects on wildlife, a windfarm on Brush Mountain would adversely affect people. The Brush Mountain site is highly visible from the entire city of Altoona, Hollidaysburg, and Scotch Valley, creating serious aesthetic considerations regarding an industrial windplant that will be visible on a daily basis to 100,000 people. Each turbine will be vulnerable to lightning strikes, resulting in a high risk of fire in the forested Kettle Reservoir watershed. The windfarm would require the construction of one mile of new road for every 8 turbines on Brush Mountain, resulting in increased runoff and sedimentation. Each turbine also requires the clearing and grading of 3-5 acres surrounding it for construction and maintenance. Because of the risk of ice and broken parts being thrown from the rotors, people will not be able to walk near the towers, locking up large portions of Brush Mountain that were previously available to the public for hiking and hunting. Each turbine also produces disturbing low-pitched thumping and grinding noises at 100 decibels, which can be heard up to 1,500 feet away regularly, and up to a mile downwind. Residents of the Village of Elberta and Scotch Valley, both of which would be downwind of the windfarm on Brush Mountain, would be harmed by these problems and the resulting decline in property values.

It should be obvious that, because of its adverse effects on both people and wildlife, a windfarm on Brush Mountain is a bad idea.



Industrial wind turbines are spaced 8 per mile and require massive grading and clearing on once-rugged mountain terrain, leaving forested ridgetops scalped.



Massive industrial wind turbines require extensive fragmentation of ridgetop forests for their construction, maintenance, and operational efficiency. Each turbine is forty stories tall, with 120 foot blades attached to a 60 ton nacelle filled with 200 gallons of oil.

Audubon Joins with Other Conservationists to sue Federal Government and save Songbird Rapidly Disappearing from Eastern Forests

Five conservation groups representing almost one million members filed suit on February 28 against Interior Secretary Gale Norton and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for ignoring their petition to add the Cerulean Warbler to the nation's list of threatened species. The groups filed their petition more than five years ago, and repeatedly have sought to compel the agency to follow the legal requirements for responding to such citizen petitions. In the intervening years, the rate of the bird's decline appears to have quickened, and threats to the bird's survival have worsened.

National Audubon Society, Defenders of Wildlife, Southern Appalachian Biodiversity Project, Western North Carolina Alliance and Heartwood filed suit in District Court in Washington D.C. They are among the 28 conservation groups from across the East that petitioned the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) in 2000 to list the bird as threatened and designate critical habitat for its long-term survival.

The Cerulean Warbler population has dropped almost 82% throughout its U.S. range over the last 40 years, making it the fastest declining warbler in the country. In the U.S., the worst of the Cerulean's decline has been in the core of its range – 80% in the Cumberland Plateau in Tennessee, Kentucky and West Virginia, and 65% in the Ohio Hills in Ohio, West Virginia and Pennsylvania. The Cerulean would be the first warbler listed as threatened under the Act. Three other species of warbler found in the U.S. on the list – Bachman's, Kirtland's, and Golden-cheeked – are endangered.

To read the press release in its entirety, go to [http://audubon.org/news/press_releases/Cerulean Warbler 03 03 06.html](http://audubon.org/news/press_releases/Cerulean_Warbler_03_03_06.html).

JVAS to celebrate International Migratory Bird Day at Canoe Creek State Park on Saturday, May 13

Join Juniata Valley Audubon president and Important Bird Area coordinator Dr. Stan Kotala for a 2-3 hour bird walk at Canoe Creek State Park on Saturday May 13. Meet at the Canoe Creek State Park visitor/environmental education center at 8:30am. We'll walk about 3 miles along established easy trails to discover our feathered friends who live in forest, field, and marsh. Bring your binoculars and expect to see close to 100 species of birds. Checklists will be provided.

This program is suitable for all ages and skill levels.

Call Dr. Stan Kotala at 946-8840 ccwiba@keyconn.net for more information.

DCNR CONSIDERS CONVERTING 40,000 ACRES OF STATE FOREST LAND INTO INDUSTRIAL WINDPLANTS

The Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources has announced that it is considering converting up to 40,000 acres of our State Forest lands into industrial windplants, also known as "windfarms."

Juniata Valley Audubon is very troubled by the possibility of opening of our State Forest lands to industrial wind development because of forest fragmentation, bird and bat deaths, and harm to ridgetop endemic species such as the Allegheny woodrat, the timber rattlesnake, and the hermit thrush, as well as harm to forest interior species such as the black-throated green warbler, the scarlet tanager, the fisher, and the bobcat. On State Forest lands the harm done by industrial windplants to both outdoor recreation and wildlife will far outweigh any benefit of this expensive and unreliable form of energy production.

Although DCNR Secretary Michael DiBerardinis stated that the DCNR does not now have legislative authority to lease state forestlands for wind energy development, nonetheless he indicated that the department already has developed draft evaluation criteria which the DCNR intends to apply to all State Forests in order to identify areas where this industrial development may be appropriate. It appears that the department's strategy will rely on this evaluation "tool" to assess on a case-by-case basis the feasibility of incoming development proposals seeking to build windplants in State Forests.

While this apparently cautious approach is good news, Juniata Valley Audubon believes that the refinement of the evaluation tool should be accompanied by - or hopefully preceded by - an assessment of the scale and impact of the development potential. We would be concerned that if a screening "tool" is applied to each project proposal on a case-by-case basis, the perspective about cumulative impacts may not be adequately considered - especially given the likely strong political pressure which may accompany each wind energy project proposal.

Juniata Valley Audubon has done a preliminary GIS analysis using the wind class mapping data from National Renewable Energy Lab, and has calculated the acreage of Class 3 and higher windy areas that are coincident with the GIS map of State Forest landholdings (distributed via PASDA). Class 3 winds are now considered potentially suitable for industrial wind turbines, and many wind projects built in the Commonwealth have turbines sited in areas mapped as Class 3 (and even in Class 2). However, Class 4 through 7 provide more desirable wind conditions for commercial development.

A summary table following this article shows the acreage of potentially developable land by wind class for the 16 State Forests in Pennsylvania which have Class 3 and above average annual windpower. Note that more than 60,000 acres (nearly 3%) of State Forest lands are estimated to be potentially suitable for siting industrial wind turbines. This acreage total equals nearly 100 square miles! Most of this acreage is Class 3, but over 11,000 acres are considered to be Class 4+ and thus would be prime targets for development. Over 3,600 of these 11,000 acres are rated as Class 5 or better, and therefore these sites likely will be the most desired locations.

Of course, not all of this acreage is likely to be directly disturbed in the siting of wind turbines - even if turbines were permitted in every possible site. However, the acreage totals provided also do not consider the secondary impact of construction disturbances resulting from the negative edge-effects due to habitat fragmentation - which would extend at least 100-meters from large roads, powerlines, and turbine clearings, destroying much forest-interior habitat. Also not factored into the table's acreage totals are the potential noise and scenic impacts associated with huge wind turbines - which would extend much farther than 100 meters and may detract from the recreational experience of visitors to State Forest lands and surrounding properties.

Consequently, Juniata Valley Audubon does not find it particularly reassuring to hear that "at best a percent or two" of the Keystone State's 2.1-million acres of state forestlands (20-40,000+ acres) would be potentially suitable for industrial wind energy development. We hope that the DCNR will not only "refin[e]" the screening tool, but also complete a detailed analysis that examines the potential cumulative impacts resulting from industrial wind energy development of the Commonwealth's State Forests.

We strongly believe that, given the rapid and reckless development of industrial windplants on privately-owned ridgetops, it is essential that Pennsylvania's State Forests remain off-limits to industrial wind energy development. Given that 95% of the continental United States' wind power potential exists west of the Mississippi River, the harm done by industrial windplants to both outdoor recreation and wildlife on the Commonwealth's State Forests will far outweigh any benefit of this expensive and unreliable form of energy production.

If you agree, then please sign and send the enclosed post-card to DCNR Secretary DiBerardinis.

Potential Windplant Development Sites in Pennsylvania State Forests

State Forest	Class 3 Wind Acreage	Class 4 Wind Acreage	Class 5 Wind Acreage	Total Class 3+ Acreage
Bald Eagle State Forest	6,446	478		6,924
Buchanan State Forest	5,885	3,458	1,128	9,343
Delaware State Forest	60			60
Elk State Forest	1,063	137	15	1,199
Forbes State Forest	8,122		75	8,122
Gallitzin State Forest	5,469	1,067	588	6,536
Michaux State Forest	4,558	89		4,647
Moshannon State Forest	939			939
Rothrock State Forest	3,928	1,621	439	5,549
Sproul State Forest	904			904
Susquehannock State Forest	453			453
Tiadahton State Forest	787	158		945
Tioga State Forest	957	1		958
Tuscarora State Forest	9,745	4,132	1,360	13,877
Weiser State Forest	546			546
Wyoming State Forest	58			58
Totals	49,921	11,140	3,605	61,061

Jody Wallace moves from Education Chair to "The Creature Teacher"

By Arran Shields

Jody Wallace as "The Creature Teacher"



At the March JVAS board meeting, Jody Wallace resigned her former position of education chair.

"When Charlie Hoyer was president, he asked me to be the JVAS education chair. I said I would do it for one year. That was at least five years ago." Her reason stands with her own small business known as "The Creature Teacher" LLC. She started her own free-lance environmental education program, but it conflicted with the JVAS.

"I would get calls asking for me to do a program, but I didn't know if they were calling for The Creature Teacher, or for the JVAS. I guess the biggest problem was that I charged for The Creature Teacher sessions. It was all too awkward, so I resigned from the JVAS posi-

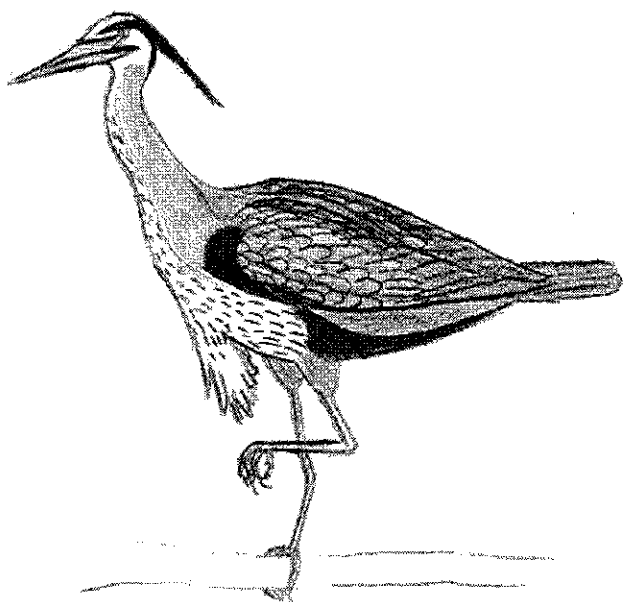
tion. The other board members were very supportive of my decision; I was very grateful."

So what exactly does Jody Wallace do in her business?

"As the creature teacher my mission is to get young people excited about learning through the use of animals and hands-on activities. While most programs focus on science, I integrate math, writing, history and the arts into my lessons. As a certified biology and environmental education teacher, I work with all sorts of youth groups such as schools, day care, camps, libraries, and home schools"

She offers programs such as falcons, fossils, frogs, fish, stream macroinvertebrates, insects, animals in winter, germs, nature walks and games.

How will all this affect the JVAS? Wallace says that Dr. Stan Kotala will be taking over the education chair position, but she feels that he is over-tasked as JVAS president, Ft. Roberdeau Association board member, Sierra Club executive committee member, Rails-to-Trails board member, Little Juniata River Association board member, and leading the fight against inappropriate wind plant development on forested ridgetops. She hopes someone else will step into the education chair position and relieve the over-burdened Stan. Never fear young ones, *Jody pledged one percent of her earnings as The Creature Teacher to JVAS education endeavors!*



Great Blue Heron

by JVAS Gnatcatcher staff artist
Emily Majcher


Plant Trees to curb Global Climate Change

The large-scale planting of trees and other highly productive ecosystems could offset one-third of the annual U.S. carbon emissions that contribute to climate change, according to a new report. The costs of sequestering 500 tons of carbon per year ranges from \$30 to \$90 per ton, according to "The Cost of U.S. Forest-based Carbon Sequestration," published by the Pew Center on Global Climate Change (pewclimate.org). These costs compare favorably with estimated costs of other options, including switching from fossil fuels or improving energy efficiency. "We need to consider the full range of solutions - and that includes carbon storage in forests," said Eileen Claussen, the center's president. "This report shows that large-scale, forest-based sequestration can be a cost-effective tool which should be considered seriously by policymakers," she said.

***An average-size tree absorbs 50 pounds
of carbon dioxide per year***

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The Creature Teacher

Jody Wallace

Certified Environmental Teacher

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creatureteach@aol.com



Municipal Planner Lee Slusser receives 2006 JVAS Conservation Award



At the JVAS spring banquet held in Fort Roberdeau's White Oak Hall, the 2006 JVAS conservation award was presented to Lee Slusser because of his attention to the conservation and preservation of natural areas in the revision of the Blair County Comprehensive Plan. As assistant planning director for the Blair County Planning Commission, Lee was responsible for organizing the process leading to the adoption of a new county plan that is well-balanced and specifically calls for the preservation of wetlands, floodplains, and steep slopes. Lee also spearheaded the creation of the Blair County Greenways Plan which establishes areas where the preservation of the natural landscape should be given first priority.

Throughout the process, Lee Slusser exemplified excellence in public service and truly deserves the 2006 JVAS conservation award.

Pennsylvania leads nation in Farm Preservation

Close to \$150 million will be spent in Pennsylvania this year to preserve an additional 2,000 farms from development. The Commonwealth leads the nation in the number of farms and acres preserved, with close to 3,000 farms and more than 300,000 acres protected from the 'dozer and the paver. \$65 million of this money is the result of the \$625 million Growing Greener II bond issue approved by Pennsylvania voters in spring of '05.

JVAS Bird Nest Collection displayed at Juniata Elementary School Science Day, April 7



Close to 500 students at Juniata Elementary visited Juniata Valley Audubon's display table at the school's Science Day on April 7. This year's JVAS topic was bird's nests, featuring nests of the Alder Flycatcher, the Red-winged Blackbird, the Wood Thrush, the Gray Catbird, the Phoebe, the Bluebird, the Black-capped Chickadee, the Louisiana Waterthrush, the Field Sparrow, the Chipping Sparrow, and the American Robin as well as a taxidermy specimen of a Ruffed Grouse on her nest, which was extremely popular!

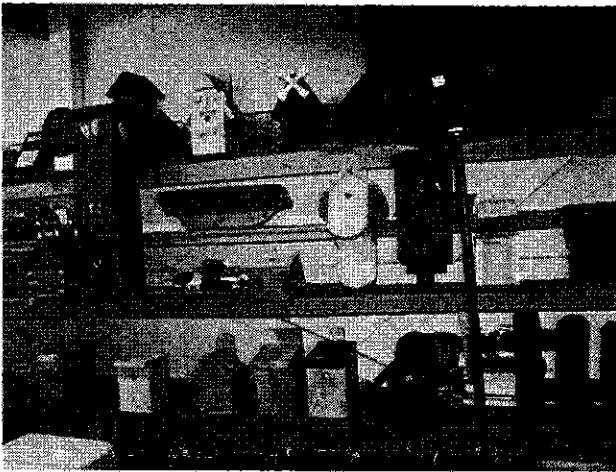
Maryland Governor changes his mind!

Gnatcatcher readers may remember an article in the Jan/Feb '05 JVAS newsletter detailing Maryland Governor Robert Ehrlich's plan to sell "excess" Maryland state forest and park land to developers. It seems that the governor's had a change of heart, since he's facing reelection this fall, and now is backing full funding for the Old Line State's key land conservation efforts.

JVAS Bluebird Trail established at Fort Roberdeau County Park

Thanks to generous donations of bird houses by JVAS members Tom Harvey, John Betting, and Pennsylvania Game Commission Regional Wildlife Diversity Biologist Dan Mummert, Juniata Valley Audubon last month established a 20-house bluebird trail, and mounted 3 kestrel boxes, a flicker box and one barn owl box in trees bordering the fields at Fort Roberdeau County Park in Sinking Valley

JVAS volunteers will monitor and maintain the bird boxes.



A small sampling of Tom Harvey's craftsmanship on display in his stand at the Water Street Flea Market just off the Lower Trail.



JVAS member Tom Harvey donated kestrel and flicker boxes for our trail at Fort Roberdeau County Park in Sinking Valley. Tom also makes bird feeders and can make items to your specifications. He's at the Water Street Flea Market most weekends and can be reached at 814-643-7118 or trv@pennswoods.net. Stop by his stand at Water Street or give him a call to thank him for his work or, better yet, buy one of his bird houses or feeders to help our feathered friends.

JVAS FIELD TRIP TO HIGHLIGHT THREATENED VERNAL POOLS AND WILDFLOWERS AT CANOE CREEK STATE PARK

Join JVAS president Dr. Stan Kotala for a 4 mile hike along Moore's Hill trail at Canoe Creek State Park to observe wildflowers including the rare yellow lady's slipper. We'll also see bloodroot, trillium, and hillsides covered with flowering redbud. **Special emphasis will be on the 1/2 mile of the trail along Canoe Creek which is rich in wildflowers and vernal pools but which DCNR Region 3 has proposed converting into a hard-surface bike trail.** This will be a joint field trip with the Pennsylvania Native Plant Society, the Ridge and Valley Outings Club, and the Moshannon Group of the Sierra Club. Hike length is 4 miles. Meet at the Canoe Creek State Park Environmental Education/Visitor Center at 2pm.

Call Dr. Stan Kotala at 946-8840 home or 239-2988 work for details.

Canoe Creek State Park Vernal Pools Registered in Pennsylvania Seasonal Pools Registry Program

The Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program has initiated an extensive program to identify and map the Keystone State's remaining seasonal pools through a web-based registry program. The project is designed to develop a comprehensive list of seasonal pools in the Commonwealth and the types of habitat that these areas are providing for the animals that depend on them.

This spring, Canoe Creek State Park's remaining vernal pools were registered in this program and will be monitored on a regular basis to prevent degradation or destruction. Information from this monitoring will help ecologists to better characterize the obligate plants and animals found in seasonal pools.

If you know of any seasonal pools and would like to register them to aid in their protection, please visit www.paconserve.org/rc/sp.



Vernal pool along Canoe Creek adjacent to the Moore's Hill trail near Beaverdam Road. This pool complex is threatened by a proposed bicycle trail. Other pools in the park have been destroyed by filling or draining, which are the most common causes of seasonal pool loss.

Wood frog and spotted salamander eggs found in the vernal pool depicted above. Seasonal pools are critical to the survival of many amphibian species as well as to reptiles, such as the spotted turtle.



Proper Siting of Industrial Windplants essential to protecting Bats

*by Dr. Michael Gannon, Professor of Biology at Penn State, and Research Associate
for Carnegie Museum of Natural History*

Bats are ecological keystone species in most ecosystems worldwide. In the United States they are the major predator of night flying insects including many of our most troublesome crop pests; the monetary value of the insect control they provide has been estimated in the billions of dollars annually in this country alone. However bat populations are declining worldwide. Loss or degradation of habitat due to humans is considered to be a primary reason for this decline.

What scientists and most conservationists are advocating is that in the development of any energy project, and particularly those that involve wind energy, such projects be evaluated during the pre-construction stage for the impact they will have on wildlife. In this case, the continued long term damage and destruction that poorly placed windfarms can do to bat populations is enormous.

There are numerous examples of wind farms in Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Virginia, and other locations in the Northeastern US that did not adequately evaluate the impact they would have on wildlife in general or more specifically on bats. As a result, hundreds of bats are being killed annually at each of these sites. Placing a wind farm in the pathway of a major migratory route that results in the destruction of hundreds or thousands of bats is needless. Pre-construction evaluation as part of the environmental impact statement performed in permitting these sites could provide important information about the suitability of a particular site and its long term impact on wildlife. This would result not in a prohibition of wind energy, but would allow for more careful site selection and placement that avoids or minimizes negative wildlife effects.

Citizens need to become more educated on these issues, so they realize this is not simply cheaper energy vs. "a few dead bats". *This issue is about pre-construction evaluation to minimize environmental impact in site choice and placement vs. further degradation of our natural resources. What we save in energy costs we will assuredly spend many times over in insect control should bat populations continue to decline.*

Wind farms have their role, but so do bats. There is absolutely no need to sacrifice one for the other. What is needed are proper regulations based on scientific data, to insure that both can coexist.



The Indiana bat is the only federally endangered mammal in Pennsylvania. 90% of the entire population survives the winter in just a handful of caves in the eastern United States, including the Hartman Mine on Moore's Hill in Canoe Creek State Park, less than two miles from the proposed industrial windplant on Brush Mountain west of Scotch Valley. The largest maternity colony of the Indiana bat in the Keystone State is centered around Route 22 southwest of the park. The industrial windplant at Meyersdale killed 600 bats in just 6 weeks in 2004, after which the windplant owner refused to allow additional bat research at the site.

Join JUNIATA VALLEY AUDUBON!

Juniata Valley Audubon membership provides you with the following benefits:

- Notification of Juniata Valley Audubon's exciting activities including nature programs, field trips and other events
- Subscription to the bimonthly chapter newsletter, *The Gnatcatcher*
- Opportunities to participate in conservation projects and environmental advocacy, and have fun!

Become a chapter-only member: _____ Individual: \$15 _____ Family: \$20 _____ Supporting: \$35
 _____ Friend of JVAS: \$50 _____ Corporate: \$100

_____ Life Membership: \$500— JVAS Life Membership provides you with all the benefits listed above for a once-in-a-lifetime fee of \$500.

Name _____
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c/o Dr. Stan Kotala, President
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McMullen Road
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		<twentz2@verizon.net>	

MAY PROGRAM

May 16, 2006

"Warbler Identification in the Field"- JVAS President Stan Kotala will give a presentation to help beginners identify the Juniata Valley's warblers by sight and sound.

No June program due to annual picnic.

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.

JVAS Juniata Club River Trips take place according to weather and water levels. If you would like your name added to the Juniata Club roster, contact Helena Kotala at ccwiba@keyconn.net or 946-8840. She will notify you of upcoming trips by email or phone.

MAY & JUNE FIELD TRIPS

May 19, 20, & 21, 2006

Piney Tract and Presque Isle State Park

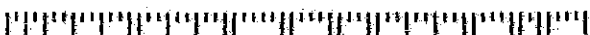
This nature/birding trip will take us to northwestern Pennsylvania where we will visit the Clarion area and it's re-claimed strip mines in search of Clay-colored and Henslow's Sparrow as well as Upland Sandpiper. Overnight in Clarion. Saturday will find us on Presque Isle in search of spring neo-tropical migrants. Overnight in Erie. We will return home on Sunday. Meet at Unkel Joe's in Altoona Friday evening at 6 PM.

June 20, 2006

Annual Picnic

Join us for our annual picnic at Canoe Creek State Park. It will be a potluck supper, beginning at 6 PM, followed by a nature walk. Meet at Pavilion 2. Call Stan Kotala at 946-8840 or ccwiba@keyconn.net for details

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Red Fox
by JVAS member
Emily Majcher

16686-0068

8/1/2006

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