



# The Gnatcatcher

Newsletter of Juniata Valley Audubon

P.O. Box 42, Tyrone, Pennsylvania 16686

JVAS.org

Vol. XLIV, No. 3 — May/June 2012

## In Danger: Funding for Land Conservation in Pennsylvania

Act now to stop the largest cut to conservation and recreation in Pennsylvania history from becoming law !

According to the Pennsylvania Land Trust Association, Governor Corbett's proposed 2012–13 budget eliminates ***all conservation, park, and recreation funding*** from the Keystone Recreation, Park and Conservation Fund. The budget goes on to propose that the cut be made permanent. This means a loss of \$30 million in 2012–13 alone — and the same or more in every year thereafter. It's the biggest cut to conservation funding ever proposed in Pennsylvania.

Governor Corbett's budget is a proposal. You have the power to stop it from becoming law. Your actions are critical to showing legislators that Keystone is important to their districts. Lawmakers need to hear from a broad group of people. They need to understand that it's about more than helping individual farmers or a few outdoor recreation enthusiasts. It's about the health of the environment, the agricultural industry, local jobs, and our communities.

Be vocal! Please reach out to your state senator and representative. Old-fashioned letters and face-to-face meetings deliver the best results. Phone calls are next best. E-mail messages are better than nothing but are considerably less effective than the other approaches — unless you have your legislator's private e-mail address.

- Tell them that Keystone has supported important projects in their district and is vital to making new projects happen.

- Tell them you oppose the governor's budget proposal to divert community park and land trust grant money from the Keystone Recreation, Park and Conservation Fund to general state operations.

- Request that they tell their legislative leaders and colleagues that the protection of the Keystone Recreation, Park and Conservation Fund must be a top budget priority.

Please view this effort as a *campaign*. Contact your legislators now. And check with them every couple weeks to reaffirm your concern and to ask what they have done to help Keystone in the intervening time. It's crucial that the pressure be maintained on senators and representatives. They are hearing from a lot of interest groups and will quickly forget about helping conservation if they aren't constantly reminded.

The Keystone Recreation, Park and Conservation Fund is Pennsylvania's only funding source that directs money specifically to community park and recreation grants and land trust grants. We can't afford to lose it. Please take action. ❖

## The Gnatcatcher

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for members of the...

### JUNIATA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY

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The Juniata Valley Audubon Society (JVAS) is a chapter of the National Audubon Society and is dedicated to the conservation and restoration of natural ecosystems, focusing on birds, other wildlife, and their habitats for the benefit of humanity and the Earth's biological diversity. Juniata Valley Audubon accomplishes its mission through advocacy, science, land stewardship, and education — working directly with Audubon Pennsylvania, the Pennsylvania state office of the National Audubon Society.

The JVAS is a tax-exempt, not-for-profit, educational organization as described in section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Gifts are deductible for income tax purposes (Tax ID # 25-1533496).

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## President's Message

"One of the penalties of an ecological education is that one lives alone in a world of wounds. Much of the damage inflicted on land is quite invisible to laymen. An ecologist must either harden his shell and make believe that the consequences of science are none of his business, or he must be the doctor who sees the marks of death in a community that believes itself well and does not want to be told otherwise."

— Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*

What would Aldo Leopold think if he were alive today? According to an article in the latest issue of *Orion* magazine — "Sand County, the Sequel" by Sandra Steingraber — the sand from Leopold's beloved "sand county" region of Wisconsin is being mined for use in fracking. Sand mines 500 to 1000 acres in size dot the landscape, the streams and air are filled with hazardous silica dust, and rural roads are being pounded apart by quarry trucks. Land deemed worthless in Leopold's day is now very valuable indeed, and in an even grimmer irony, as Steingraber puts it, "Aldo Leopold's farm in central Wisconsin could end up fracking Rachel Carson's childhood home on the Marcellus shale of western Pennsylvania."

These are the sorts of things that were on my mind this year as we marked another Earth Day. Things are going from bad to worse on nearly every front, and any political solutions seem farther away than ever, given that Congress and most state legislatures are divided between two warring factions equally devoted to potent brands of wishful thinking: those who cling to the belief that global climate change isn't real and that we can go on burning fossil fuels and generally consuming non-renewable resources forever, and those who fantasize that if we just build enough wind turbines on the ridges and solar plants in the desert, and if everyone recycles and buys green products, we can continue more or less as we are now and the planet will be fine. We are still living in Aldo Leopold's "community that believes itself well and does not want to be told otherwise."

Worse, in the intervening decades we've become even more disconnected from nature. Few kids even go outside anymore. And if the environmental movement has become so willing

[ Continued on page 5 ]



### Jacksons are recipients of 2012 JVAS Conservation Award

At the spring banquet of Juniata Valley Audubon in April, President Dave Bonta presented Laura and Mike Jackson, of Everett, with this year's JVAS Conservation Award.

The 2012 JVAS Conservation Award went to a couple who probably needs no introduction: Laura and Mike Jackson, of Everett. They made the mistake of missing the board meeting where such decisions are made, which we understand was only because Mike was so sick he couldn't get out of bed.

Though it may seem a little self-congratulatory to give the award to JVAS board members, Laura and Mike's activities extend well beyond our organization. They've done so much to advocate for wildlife and conservation issues in central Pennsylvania and beyond, there's simply no one else in the area who deserves it as much.

Their unfailing dedication of most of their free time to championing nature in one form or another is humbling. They've been environmental educators in the classroom and beyond, wildlife rehabilitators, citizen scientists, forest stewards, and activists of steely determination with SOAR

(Save Our Allegheny Ridges — an organization devoted to preserving Pennsylvania's Allegheny Mountains) and the JVAS. As an example of this commitment, Laura joined the lawsuit against the DEP to save the Heller Caves as an individual, alongside the JVAS and the Center for Biological Diversity, and participated in every phone conference and meeting.

Last year, Laura and Mike decided to give away all development rights on their 113 acres of wooded mountaintop land and donated a conservation easement to the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy.

And as an example of the kind of citizen science they engage in, they've been keeping meticulous records on all the box turtles and timber rattlesnakes on their land for years, photographing and measuring each one they find.

Laura and Mike, you are an inspiration to us all!  
— Dave Bonta

**PENN STATE** Penn State Master Gardeners, the Pennsylvania Native Plant Society, and Shaver's Creek Environmental Center present the—



**Central Pennsylvania**  
**Native Plant Festival 2012**

Saturday, May 5, 10:00 a.m.–3:00 p.m.  
 Shaver's Creek Environmental Center

Come celebrate the arrival of spring, the return of wildflowers, and the beginning of another gardening season at Shaver's Creek! Enjoy a hike, bring a picnic, and join us for our scheduled educational walks and programs.

**Educational Walks and Programs:**

<p><b>11 a.m.</b>  <b>Gardening for Pollinators</b></p>	<p><b>12:30 p.m.</b>  <b>Shaver's Creek Gardens and Landscape Tour</b></p>	<p><b>2 p.m.</b>  <b>Using Native Plants to Attract Birds</b></p>
<p><b>All Day</b>  <b>Information and Resource Tables</b>          Native Plant Gardening          Edible Plants and Mushrooms  <i>Have your questions answered!</i></p>	<p><b>1–3 p.m.</b>  <b>Meet the Birds of Prey</b>  <i>See our resident hawks, owls, and eagles up close and learn interesting facts!</i></p>	

**Support Pennsylvania Vendors Offering:**

**Native Plants**  **Local Food** 

Admission to the festival is free, but please come prepared to support our vendors through purchases of plants and/or food!

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See more details about the Native Plant Festival, programs, and vendors at:  
**[www.PAWildflower.org](http://www.PAWildflower.org) or [www.ShaversCreek.org](http://www.ShaversCreek.org)**

## Game Commission acquires lands to expand SGLs 166, 147, and 41

The Pennsylvania Board of Game Commissioners in April approved three purchases of land that will expand State Game Lands (SGLs) Blair and Bedford counties.

The Conservation Fund will assist the Pennsylvania Game Commission in the purchase of 2,157.43 acres in multiple tracts in Frankstown, Blair, Taylor and Catherine townships, Blair County, and Bloomfield and Greenfield townships, Bedford County, adjoining or near SGLs 166, 147, and 41. This purchase will take place in two phases.

Phase one of the project includes the acquisition of three separate tracts for \$625,000: 403 acres in Frankstown, Blair and Taylor townships, Blair County, which adjoin SGL 147, and is referred to as the Reservoir Tract; 95.88 acres northwest of Roaring Spring in Taylor Township, Blair County, which is midway between SGL 147 and 41, and is referred to as Dunnings Ridge Tract; and 368.55 southeast of Claysburg in Bloomfield and Greenfield townships, Bedford County, near SGL 41 and is referred to as the Dunnings I-99 Tracts.

The tracts are forested with mixed northern hardwoods in various age classes with mountain laurel understory at the higher elevations and greenbrier, witch hazel, and grape-vine thickets present at lower elevations. Rock outcropping also are present, especially at higher elevations on the Reservoir Tract.

Settlement shall be held no later than June 21, 2012. The fee for these three tracts will be paid with funds from third-party commitments for compensation of habitat and recreational losses which occurred on SGLs from previously approved projects.

Phase two of the project includes 1,290 acres in Frankstown and Catharine townships, Blair County, adjoining SGL 166, and is referred to as the Beaver Dam Tracts. These tracts are forested with mixed northern hardwoods and lie within both an Important Mammal Area and Important Bird Area, which support the existence of both state and federally listed species.

The cost of the property is \$2,458,000, minus

any funds raised by The Conservation Fund. The property will be purchased with funds from third party commitments for compensation of habitat and recreational losses that occurred on SGLs from previously approved projects and also may be partially funded by habitat mitigation commitments for impacts to state and federally listed species.

Settlement shall be held no later than June 30, 2013. ❖

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## President's Message [Continued from page 2]

to sacrifice irreplaceable wildlife habitat to feel-good “green energy” boondoggles, maybe it's because so few of its supporters can even name the trees on their own street.

That's why I'm grateful for the JVAS. The older I get, the more I realize this is my crowd: people who really care about their neighbors, non-human as well as human, and take the trouble to learn their names and something of their habits. Without you all, I would feel very much as if I were “living alone in a world of wounds.” The fact is that ecological knowledge has greatly advanced and spread since Leopold's day, and there are more and better sources of information available to us than ever before.

“Citizen science” projects flourish all around the country, and not just with birds. Who would've guessed, for example, that reptiles and amphibians had such a large following if the Pennsylvania Herpetological Atlas project had never been started? Nature lovers may be marginalized in the halls of power, but I suspect our numbers are actually growing. Certainly, JVAS membership rolls continue to grow.

It's still the case, though, that “much of the damage inflicted on land is quite invisible to laymen,” and I am continually wrestling with the question of how much to say to, for example, first-time visitors to Plummer's Hollow. Since I've lived here for most of the past 41 years, I tend to focus on the “wounds”: the invasive plants, the dying hemlocks and mountain laurel, the light pollution at night, the chronic effects of deer over-browsing, etc. If I only point out all the negative things to our visitors, however, it's unlikely

to get them excited about protecting nature or even learning much more about it. So I try to balance gloom and doom with a little sweetness and light.

Some things have gotten better in recent decades, and I think it's worth pointing those out, too. There are so many more black bear, turkeys, coyotes, and bobcats than there used to be. We have fishers and river otters in the area once again, thanks to successful reintroduction programs. The gypsy moth caterpillars are much less of a threat than they used to be. Ravens are no longer just wilderness birds. The bald eagles have returned. I'm not quite enough of an optimist to maintain that the glass is half full; I'd say it's a quarter full at best. But that remaining quarter still has a lot going for it. So let's get outside and enjoy what's left — and drag along a few friends or family as often as we can.

— Dave Bonta

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### NRCS golden-winged warbler habitat initiative funding available

The golden-winged warbler (*Vermivora chrysoptera*) is a tropical migrant that breeds in the northeastern and north-central states. It's one of the most critically threatened, non-federally listed vertebrates in eastern North America. Populations have declined by 6.5 percent annually since 1966. In 2010, the golden-winged warbler was petitioned for listing under the Endangered Species Act.

Golden-winged warbler population declines are due to competition and hybridization with a close relative, the blue-winged warbler, along with habitat loss of young forests.

Currently, there's funding available for Blair County through the NRCS (Natural Resources Conservation Service of the U.S. Department of

Agriculture) for landowners willing to create and/or maintain golden-winged warbler habitat.

Habitat types used for nesting include wind or fire, abandoned farmland, scrub oak barrens, utility rights-of-way, edges of reclaimed strip mines, regenerating beaver meadows, and swamp forests with partially open canopies. Because young-forest habitat is a short-lived resource for breeding golden-winged warblers, patches may need to be created or maintained continuously across the landscape to ensure the persistence of long-term breeding populations.

A landowner creating and maintaining early successional habitat for the golden-winged warbler also will be supplying habitat for many wildlife species that require this kind of cover. Other bird species commonly found in stands with golden-winged warblers include American woodcock, ruffed grouse, eastern whip-poor-will, gray catbird, brown thrasher, chestnut-sided warbler, prairie warbler, common yellowthroat, eastern towhee, and field sparrow. Many of these disturbance-dependent species also are experiencing population declines and are of high concern. In fact, approximately 17 species of birds that depend on young forests are experiencing serious population declines.

Many mammals also use the same young-forest habitats as golden-winged warblers. These include important game animals such as black bear and white-tailed deer. Appalachian cottontail, snowshoe hare, and fisher are mammals of conservation concern in Pennsylvania that also will benefit from habitat management for golden-winged warblers.

If you're interested in working with the NRCS and receive funding to create and/or maintain young-forest habitat, contact your county NRCS office. To reach the Blair County office of the NRCS, phone 814 695-9291, Ext. 3. ❖



## Audubon Programs — May/June

JVAS programs that promote interest in, and appreciation of, conservation, ecology, and natural history are presented on the **third Tuesday** of the months September through June except for December. Unless otherwise specified, program meetings begin at 7 p.m. in the meeting room of the Bellwood-Antis Public Library, 526 Main St., Bellwood. Travel directions: Take the Bellwood exit (Exit 41) off I-99, go straight through the traffic light at the Sheetz intersection, proceed about four blocks, and turn right just before the railroad overpass. Turn left, go two blocks; the library is on the right.

Designed for a general audience, JVAS programs are free and open to the public. The Hospitality Committee offers refreshments. For more information, contact Programs Committee Chair Laura Jackson at 652-9268 or at mljackson2@embarqmail.com.

### May 15 — “An Inordinate Fondness for Mayflies”

The famously short lives and standard physical appearance of mayfly adults belie the success of this ancient insect and the true diversity within the order Ephemeroptera. From menacing tusks and spines to sleek, streamlined bodies, mayflies in their aquatic stage possess unique traits that have enabled them to thrive in a broad range of freshwater habitats. Hannah Stout, a Ph.D. candidate in entomology at Penn State, will describe mayfly diversity and explain why this extraordinary insect is important to us all.

### June 19 — Annual JVAS Maxine Leckvarcik Memorial Picnic at Canoe Creek State Park

Covered-dish social followed by an evening walk in the park. Meet at Pavilion 2 in Canoe Creek State Park at 6 p.m. For more information, contact Hospitality Committee Chair Marcia Bonta at 684-3113 or at marciabonta@hotmail.com.

JVAS THANKS ITS CORPORATE SPONSOR

JACKSONS JOURNEYS PHOTOGRAPHY

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## Audubon Field Trips — May/June

The JVAS Field Trips Committee arranges for the proper conduct of field trips that may be participated in by members of the Society and others interested in the purposes and objectives of the Society. For more information on any Audubon field trip, phone Field Trip Chair Deb Tencer at 932-9183 or send her an e-mail message at naturehikergal@gmail.com.

### May 5, Saturday — **WILDFLOWERS AND WARBLERS AT BLUE KNOB STATE PARK.**

Mike and Laura Jackson will lead a field trip to Blue Knob State Park to view spring wildflowers and migrating warblers. Meet at Chappell's Field in Blue Knob State Park at 8 a.m. The 3-hour walk will be on Sawmill Trail, which is easy, but rocky in places. Questions? Contact the Jacksons at 652-9268 or at mljackson2@embarqmail.com.

### May 6, Sunday — **SPRING MUSHROOM WALK ALONG THE LOWER TRAIL.**

Join Bill Russell, author of Field Guide to the Wild Mushrooms of Pennsylvania and the Mid-Atlantic, along with Karen Croyle. The Lower Trail is heavily collected for morels, but many other interesting mushrooms are fruiting at this time of year. We might find a few morels as well. The 4-mile hike will take about 3 hours. Meet at the Water Street entrance to the Lower Trail (near the intersection of U.S. Rt. 22 and Pa. Rt. 453) at noon. To learn more, contact JVAS Field Trips Committee Chair Deb Tencer at 932-9183 or at naturehikergal@gmail.com.

### May 12, Saturday — **ANNUAL TERRY WENTZ MEMORIAL HIKE ON MOORE'S HILL TRAIL.**

A four-mile, moderate hike on Moore's Hill Trail, in Canoe Creek State Park. The hike will honor the late Terry Wentz, former Canoe Creek State Park manager who served on the JVAS board of directors for more than a decade, including four years as president. Meet at the Canoe Creek State Park Environmental Education Center at 2 p.m. For more information, contact trip leader Dr. Stan Kotala at 946-8840 or at ccwiba@keyconn.net.

### May 19, Saturday — **SPRING WILDFLOWER WALK AT BELL'S GAP RUN.** Join JVAS board member Marcia Bonta for a walk in State Gameland

108 at Bell's Gap Run to observe spring wildflowers. Meet in the parking lot for the Bellwood Rails to Trails at 10 a.m. and then drive halfway up the mountain to a parking lot on the left. The walk is a gentle climb that leads past a variety of wildflowers on the left cliffs as well as some rare ferns. It's also a good place for spring warblers and other birds because we are looking down at large trees and the stream. Bring a trail lunch and a beverage to enjoy at the top of the hollow. For more info contact Marcia at 694-3113 or at [marciabonta@hotmail.com](mailto:marciabonta@hotmail.com).

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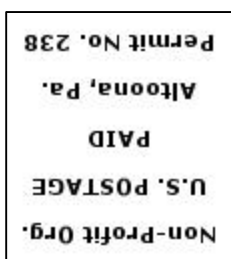
May 26, Saturday — **CCSP BUTTERFLY GARDEN WORK PARTY**. At 10 a.m., please lend a hand at Canoe Creek State Park's butterfly garden (adjacent to the Environmental Education Center). No gardening experience is necessary. Bring a covered dish item to share at a picnic afterward. Remember, the JVAS name is on the garden; so let's be proud of it!

June 10, Sunday — **MOUNTAIN LAUREL HIKE IN BRUSH MOUNTAIN WOODLANDS**. Join JVAS Field Trips Committee Chair Deb Tencer to hike The Nature Conservancy's property known as the Brush Mountain Woodlands to admire the massive amounts of Mountain Laurel along with other flora and fauna specific to this dry, rocky area. At 11 a.m., meet at Panera Bread, in Logantown Centre, to car-pool. For more info, contact Deb at 932-9183 or at [naturehikergal@gmail.com](mailto:naturehikergal@gmail.com).

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...to learn about impromptu field trips.

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