

THE GNATCATCHER

Newsletter of Juniata Valley Audubon

VOL. XLVI, NO. 3 — MAY/JUN 2014



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

~Laura Jackson~

The Eagles Have Landed!

Bald Eagles

There is a lot of buzz these days about eagles. There are over 200 pairs of bald eagles busy feeding their young right now in Pennsylvania, so it is relatively easy to see a bald eagle nest no matter where you live in the state. As Mike and I drove to the Shaver's



story photos by Trish Miller and
Mike Lanzone

Creek Native Plant sale on May 3, we were delighted to see an adult bald eagle perched in a tree near its nest—high above the Lower Trail at Water Street, just south of Rt. 22. There are 4 bald eagle nests around Lake Raystown, so your chances of seeing eagles are pretty high if you hang around the Raystown Dam.

Bedford County, where we live, now boasts two active eagle nests. We are monitoring those nests on a weekly basis, and it is amazing to see how fast the young are growing. Each nest has one eaglet, which are about the size of a chicken with very long wings. The Pennsylvania Game Commission (PGC) is to be thanked for bringing the bald eagle back to sustainable numbers in Pennsylvania.

Golden Eagles

The situation regarding golden eagles in Pennsylvania is remarkably different from bald eagles. They once bred on the Appalachian Plateau in Pennsylvania, but there are no longer any active nests of golden eagles in our state— or any other states in the eastern U.S. Yet we still see golden eagles in Pennsylvania – if you know when and where to look.

Two people who know a lot about golden eagles are Trish Miller and her husband, Mike Lanzone. Trish and Mike treated us to an hour of fascinating research on their work with eagles at our annual banquet on April 15th.

Maxine Leckvarcik Memorial Picnic

at Fort Roberdeau County Park

**Tue. June 17, 2014
4 - 8 PM**

Note: We will have a special guest at our picnic this year: a live golden eagle! Don't miss this special opportunity to view one of nature's most majestic birds!

4 PM: Glen Nelson:

Insider Fort Tour (\$3 per person)

5 PM: Stan Kotala: Nature Walk

6 PM: Glen Nelson:

Fort Roberdeau Welcome

6:15 PM: JVAS Picnic (potluck-style)

Please let our Hospitality Chair, Marcia Bonta, know what goodies you plan to bring for the picnic. Call Marcia at 814-684-3113.

THE GNATCATCHER

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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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# NEW OFFICERS INSTALLED

Dave Bonta

At our annual spring banquet, I oversaw the installation of the four new officers elected at the program meeting in March, sharing brief biographical sketches of each. For those who couldn't attend, please join me in welcoming our new secretary, Kristin Joivell; treasurer, George Mahon; vice president, Mark Bonta; and president, Laura Jackson.



Kristin Joivell, shown here on a recent JVAS hike examining a prometheus moth cocoon, is our new secretary. Kristin teaches kindergarten at the Juniata Valley Elementary School, lives in the Huntingdon area, and brings an infectious enthusiasm and a wealth of knowledge about nature to the JVAS board, being both well-read and widely traveled. Stick close to Kristin on a nature hike if you want to learn the i.d.'s of critters and wildflowers— or to generally just have a good time.

Despite his regular attendance on field trips and thus his frequent run-ins with Stan Kotala's camera, JVAS treasurer George Mahon is almost always seen with his eyes turned to the ground or the sky, displaying the same restless curiosity that led him to teach junior high science in Altoona for many years, and to first become involved in JVAS activities way back in the late 1970s. I have also grown to appreciate George's endless patience and attention to detail over the past year as he's eased into the treasurer position— surely one of the most thankless and time-consuming posts in any organization.



You'd think I'd have a better photo of my own brother, but he got off Facebook last year, so what can I do? Mark Bonta agreed to step in as vice president, which mainly means he'll be the programs chair. He's been attending programs pretty regularly since he started teaching geography at Penn State Altoona last fall. He and his wife will be moving to the area permanently in August, after a couple of years in Philadelphia and many years in Mississippi before that. Mark was a member of JVAS as a kid, which helped to spark an interest in birding and nature that now makes its way into his classes and research. He recently led a Cornell-sponsored ornithological collecting expedition to Honduras—the first in decades—to document a possible new species of ant-shrike.



Laura Jackson, our new president, hardly needs an introduction. She and her husband Mike (also a member of the board) have been among our most active members for years, attending numerous township meetings, writing letters, agitating, advocating, giving slideshows and workshops, and putting their own time and money where their mouths are on their mountainside property near Everett— a conservation showcase. Laura's always-pleasant demeanor masks a steely resolve, as many developers and politicians have learned to their sorrow. We are deeply fortunate that her work with SOAR has finally slowed down enough to permit Laura to take over as JVAS president. And oh yes, that's a hickory horned devil on her shirt.



Thanks to all four new officers for stepping up to the plate. The future of the chapter looks very bright.



# New Rule Would Protect Streams and Wetlands

from: [audubonaction.org](http://audubonaction.org)

After years of confusion about which streams and wetlands are legally protected under the Clean Water Act, the EPA has announced a proposed rule to clarify which waters will receive protection. This rule will preserve vital safeguards for our nation's waters by ensuring that all streams, and the wetlands in their floodplains, will be covered under the law. It will protect water health and habitat for the vast majority of bird species that depend on clean water, from raptors and rails to plovers and pintails, and yield significant benefits to our communities and economy.

Since its passage, the Clean Water Act has applied to most waters, including lakes, rivers, streams, and wetlands. But, major Supreme Court cases in 2001 (*SWANCC v Army Corps of Engineers*) and 2006 (*Rapanos v United States*) called the Act's extent into question because it applies to "navigable waters." The upshot from these cases is that waters must have

a "significant nexus" to traditional, navigable waters. The EPA has determined that all streams and their associated wetlands have this connection, including the seasonal or intermittent streams that cover about 60 percent of the nation's tributaries. The new rule limits pollution and infill in these waters and allows for enforcement action, including civil or criminal penalties.

Traditional farming and ranching, as well as dozens of conservation practices, are exempt under the rule, so these landowners will not be

subject to new regulations. Wetlands that are isolated from rivers and streams, such as prairie potholes, will be handled on a case-by-case basis, but the EPA is looking for input on whether these wetlands should be consistently covered as well. The EPA will begin accepting public comments in the coming days. Look out for the next Audubon Newsletter to take action on this critical issue for birds and the health of our ecosystems and communities.



Photos of a young Great Blue Heron shot on the Susquehanna by **Dave Wolf**



Online at  
**JVAS.org**



or visit JVAS on Facebook

## Eagles *continued*

Not only do golden eagles migrate through our state both spring and fall, some of them spend the winter here in heavy forest cover. Tim



Researchers Mike Lanzone and Trish Miller have just outfitted this golden eagle with a transmitter and will release it after the photo ~

Trish and Mike don't wear gloves when holding the birds ~

Flanigan, a friend of mine and a retired PGC Wildlife Conservation Officer, discovered about 10 years ago that golden eagles were feeding at the deer pit on Will's Mountain in Bedford County. Trish and Mike verified his report, and then developed an extensive research project of trapping and photographing migrating and over-wintering golden eagles in Pennsylvania. Many of the golden eagles were outfitted with transmitters that Mike builds.

My husband and I, as well as Marcia and Bruce Bonta, help with one aspect of their research - the camera trap project. We stake road-killed deer in front of a trail camera in a small clearing. The golden eagles have their picture taken when they come in to feed on the carrion. So now we have photographic evidence that golden eagles are on the high forested ridges and plateau of Pennsylvania during the winter. Dozens of other sites scattered around Pennsylvania— as well as throughout the east coast— show

that golden eagles spend much of the winter in the eastern United States. There are over 240 camera trap sites that photograph golden eagles at carrion. Volunteers maintain the sites and all the data is analyzed by Trish

and others working on the project. Eagles, ravens, and songbirds by day; coyotes, bobcat, fox, skunk, raccoon, even flying squirrels by night!

Golden eagles breed in Quebec, including the Gaspé Peninsula, but fly south each fall to over-winter in a milder climate. They head back to Quebec in February when the winds are favorable.

Thanks to Trish and Mike's research, we are learning a lot more about our winter visitors. Here are a few fascinating facts:

- ▶ Golden eagles may be able to smell meat
- ▶ Most of the eastern population of golden eagles flies along Pennsylvania's ridges during migration
- ▶ Late February to early March is the best time to see migrating golden eagles at our ridge and valley hawk watches in the spring. The best time to see them during fall migration is in November
- ▶ Mike and Trish have literally caught over 50 golden eagles. They take meticulous measurements, outfit them with transmitters, and follow their movements after they are released

- ▶ Eastern golden eagles have a larger tarsus (the long leg bone below the thigh) than western golden eagles, but DNA studies show they may not be a separate subspecies
- ▶ Golden eagles are one of our "most at risk" species in regards to kills by industrial wind turbines, as they migrate within the rotor-swept area of the turbine blades
- ▶ Lead poisoning and leg hold traps kill golden eagles
- ▶ Golden eagles feed on wild turkeys and carrion in the winter

Since the reintroduction of the bald eagle was so successful, I wonder if the Pennsylvania Game Commission will ever start a reintroduction program for golden eagles? I would support it.

Thanks to dedicated researchers like Trish Miller and Mike Lanzone, we hope to learn more about golden eagles— the largest birds in the Eastern U.S. Read more at:

<http://marciabonta.wordpress.com/category/birds/golden-eagles/>

<http://katznerlab.com/golden-eagle-movements-in-eastern-north->



Young bald eagles look a lot like golden eagles, but only golden eagles have beautiful golden hackles



# ROOFTOP Solar

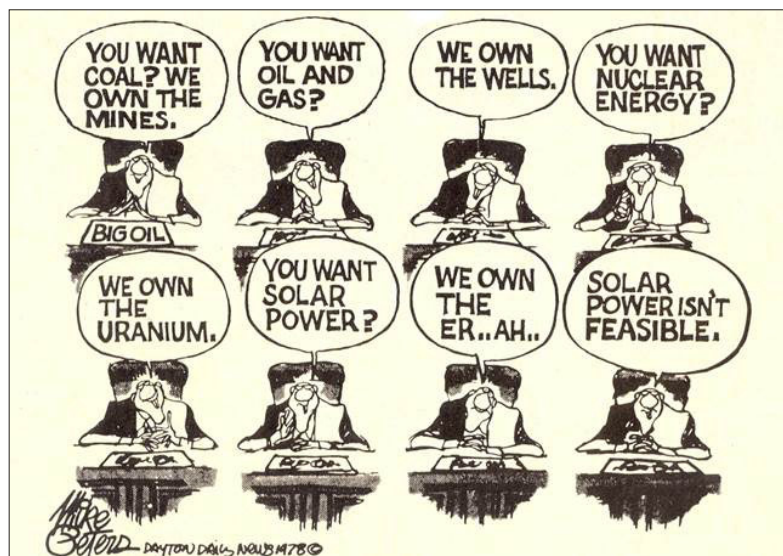
A HOT TOPIC




Audubon is interested in seeing rooftop solar become a larger part of America's energy mix. Rooftop systems are desirable because they minimize both habitat and carbon footprints simultaneously. These small-scale systems are now garnering a lot of policy attention across the country; it is no exaggeration to say that the policies that support small-scale solar are one of the hot topics for state utility commissions this year. Audubon is tracking where there is regulatory and legislative activity on these subjects in every state and we are now calling upon Auduboners to weigh in when an opportunity arises. We anticipate such an opportunity to arise in Pennsylvania sometime soon.

The Pennsylvania Public Utilities Commission indicated in February that it is looking at amending rules that govern households or businesses with rooftop solar systems. These rule changes would benefit homeowners of smaller systems as well as businesses with larger on-site systems, enabling more owners of on-site solar to receive compensation for the power they spin back to the grid. National Audubon believes these rule changes to be beneficial to the growth of rooftop solar in Pennsylvania and we plan to provide comments to the PUC when the public comment period is opened.

We encourage Audubon members to submit comments as well, and to write to the PUC supporting these proposed changes. They will help rooftop solar to become a larger part of our energy mix over the next five to ten years.



To sign up for Audubon Action Alerts, go to:  
[audubonaction.org](http://audubonaction.org)

# Join

If you join National Audubon and live in our area, you'll be considered a member of JVAS, and receive *The Gnatcatcher* in addition to Audubon magazine. **However, joining Juniata Valley Audubon directly, as a chapter—only membership, does more to support local conservation, education and advocacy.** Your chapter—only membership dues stay with JVAS and are used locally in the Juniata Valley: in Blair, Huntingdon, Centre, Bedford and Mifflin Counties.

JVAS is a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, so all donations are tax-exempt (and gratefully accepted).

JVAS membership provides you with the following benefits:

- ▶ Notification of JVAS'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.
- ▶ Have fun in joining with fellow nature enthusiasts.

Become a JVAS member at one of the annual membership rates as follows:

- |                                           |                                                   |
|-------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual, \$15 | <input type="checkbox"/> Friend of the JVAS, \$50 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family, \$20     | <input type="checkbox"/> Corporate, \$100         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Supporting, \$35 | <input type="checkbox"/> Life Membership, \$500   |

Make your check payable to JUNIATA VALLEY AUDUBON.

You can choose to opt-out of receiving the printed newsletter. *The Gnatcatcher* is available on [jvas.org](http://jvas.org) as a PDF file. If you are doing more reading online these days, you can help reduce our printing and mailing expenses by selecting this option. ☐

Mail to:

JUNIATA VALLEY AUDUBON  
 c/o Membership Chair  
 P.O. Box 42  
 Tyrone, PA 16686-0042

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_

ZIP \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

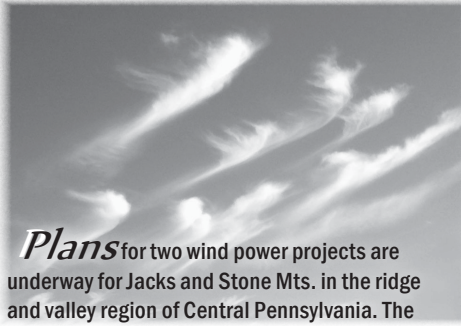
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# ***Proposed Wind Turbine Projects***

## ***on Major Raptor Migration Routes on Jacks and Stone Mts. in Central Pennsylvania***

by Greg Grove



**Plans** for two wind power projects are underway for Jacks and Stone Mts. in the ridge and valley region of Central Pennsylvania. The tops of these ridges are both very narrow and, with many sections only a few feet wide at the apex, are accurately described as “razorback.” Readers of hawk migration studies are likely aware of the significance of this region of the Appalachian Mountains for raptor migration and raptor watching. The greatest numbers of migrants occur on the Kittatinny, southern-most of the ridges, which includes the watches at Hawk Mtn., Bake Oven Knob and Waggoner’s Gap. But significant passages of raptors can also be found on the more northwesterly ridges, including Jacks and Stone Mtns., also with long-established watches. Coverage at these sites is nearly daily from early September through mid-November; each site averages 300-400 hours during the fall season, with seasonal totals of 3000-6000 raptors, excluding vultures. At Stone Mtn., the average annual count of Golden Eagles is about 100, despite decreased coverage beginning in mid-November.

The wind projects, neither of which are yet to the construction stage, are planned by two German companies, Volkswind and E.ON. The Volkswind project, which is further along in its development, is proposed to consist of 20 turbines along a four-mile portion of Jacks Mtn. near Belleville in Mifflin County. The E.ON. project would involve sections of both Jacks and Stone Mtns. in Mifflin and Huntingdon counties; details are vague and still preliminary, but suggest as many as 70 turbines could be constructed (although the actual number, if ever built, would probably be lower.) The turbines, including blades, will be over 450 feet high. Each needs an approximate 50-foot diameter concrete platform about seven feet thick. In addition, an access road would be built along the turbine platforms. As a result, about 100-feet of flat surface on top of the ridges would be required. To do this, the mountain tops would be flattened by as much as 50 feet along substantial sections of the ridge.

The potential effects of turbines on migrant raptors, other birds and bats are well known to readers. The early wind projects at Altamont Pass in California have resulted in the deaths of thousands of raptors, including many eagles (Smallwood and Thelander 2008). A recent article

in The Journal of Raptor Research documented kills of 79 Golden Eagles and 6 Bald Eagle kills at 32 other sites in ten different states from 1997 to 2012 (plus at least three more states since acceptance of the paper.) Most of the documented kills were not found through targeted searches but incidentally during routine activity at turbine sites; thus, actual eagle mortality at these sites was likely to be much higher (Pagel et al. 2013). Assessing raptor mortality at turbine sites is difficult because of the lack of thorough monitoring and a lack of access to data collected by the wind companies. While a small number of raptor kills might be justified if wind power can eventually be developed into a truly significant source of clean energy, building turbines atop known major migratory routes like Jacks and Stone Mtns. seems a very questionable proposition; at the very least it should not be done without a much better ability to assess the potential extent of mortality of birds and bats. Another very obvious concern arising from these proposed projects is the huge scale of ecosystem fragmentation and outright destruction. Creating a flat, wide ridge top 5-15 miles long (depending on the number of turbines built) will eliminate hundreds of acres of largely intact forest, a critical habitat for forest interior species.

A third important issue, indeed the major issue for most valley residents, is water. For most people in

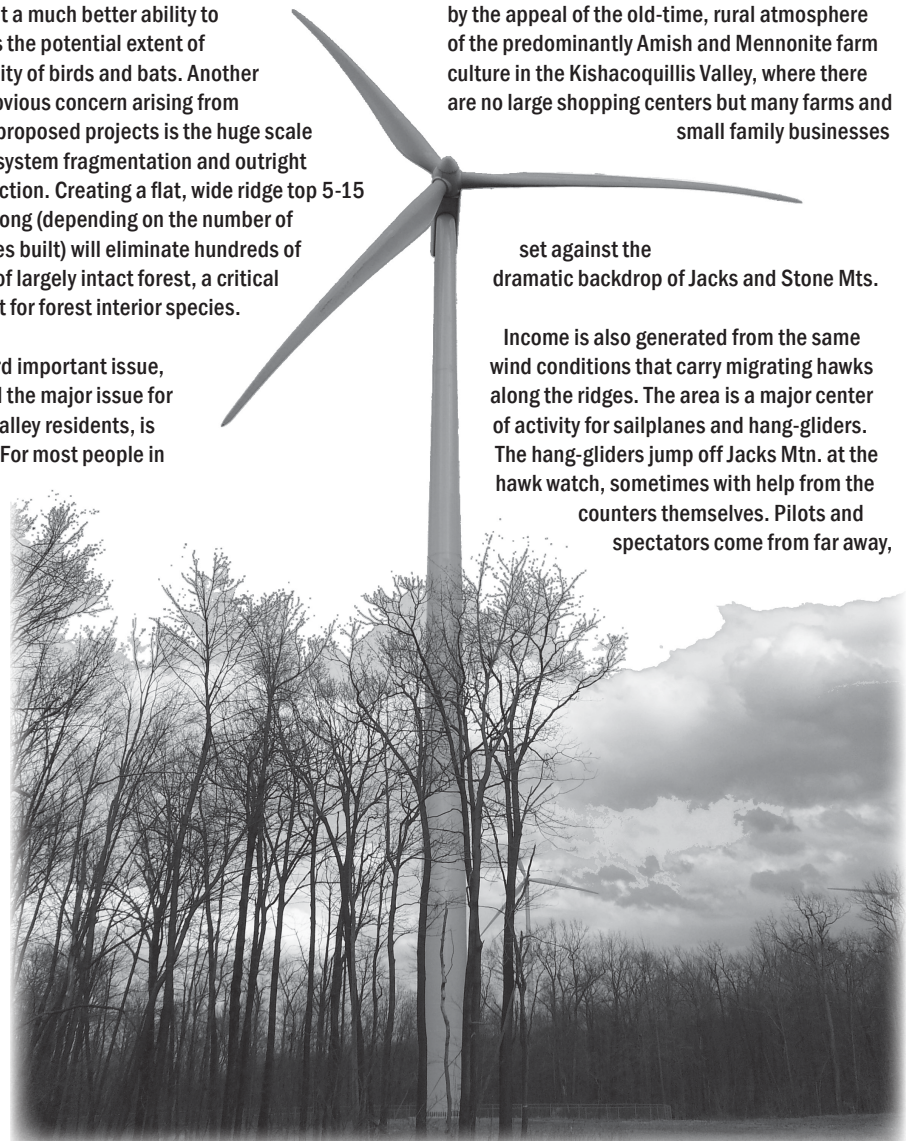
the valleys, their water comes from small streams and springs that originate on the steep slopes of the ridges. What would be the effect on water supplies for farms and homes of the massive ridgetop earth-moving operations? An additional water concern is the increased rate and volume that would result from rain and snowmelt run-off that would occur when the mountain slopes are stripped of living forest. That could lead to erosion and additional habitat deterioration far removed from the actual construction site.

Yet one more concern involves the local economy. The wind companies have both stated that these projects will create jobs and tax revenue for townships, which is likely true in some degree. But will the benefit mitigate the negative effects on the quality of life to all residents and the loss of income from tourism? Many visitors are drawn here by the appeal of the old-time, rural atmosphere of the predominantly Amish and Mennonite farm culture in the Kishacoquillis Valley, where there are no large shopping centers but many farms and small family businesses

set against the dramatic backdrop of Jacks and Stone Mtns.

Income is also generated from the same wind conditions that carry migrating hawks along the ridges. The area is a major center of activity for sailplanes and hang-gliders. The hang-gliders jump off Jacks Mtn. at the hawk watch, sometimes with help from the counters themselves. Pilots and spectators come from far away,

Photo: Ruby J. Becker





bringing a boost to the economy. It is expected these activities will be greatly curtailed or possibly even end if 450-foot turbines are on the ridges.

Some question how we can oppose a "green project" when our society desperately needs alternatives to fossil fuels. They rightly point out that some trade-offs will be necessary to realize the benefits of clean, renewable energy. However, aside from the objections already described here, the winds in this region of Pennsylvania are considered only of borderline strength and persistence for the efficient and profitable production of electricity ([http://www.windpoweringamerica.gov/maps\\_template.asp?stateab=pa](http://www.windpoweringamerica.gov/maps_template.asp?stateab=pa)). The development of renewable energy will allow reduction of the use of fossil fuels and thus the magnitude of greenhouse emissions, air pollution, and the issues associated with their extraction from the Earth. An additional expected benefit will be a reduction of the expected negative effects of climate change on habitat and biodiversity. However, benefits for biodiversity could be negated if projects adversely affect critical and sensitive habitats (Kiesecker et al. 2011).

Efforts to stop these projects are currently focused on two strategies. In Pennsylvania, a township cannot prevent outright construction of turbines on land legally leased by the companies. However, township officials can pass ordinances that restrict siting of turbines near property boundaries and that set reasonable requirements for noise, protection of water resources and for eventual decommissioning. An ordinance with these kinds of restrictions may, optimistically, cause a project to be abandoned; this approach has been successful in derailing wind projects elsewhere in Pennsylvania. At the very least, such an ordinance would offer some protection from the worst effects of turbines to residents who live nearby.

The second aspect of our efforts is to inform and educate landowners who have been or may be approached by wind companies to lease their land to construct turbines. Many landowners have already signed. But at least one of these projects appears to require significantly more leased land before plans can proceed, so we are contacting prospective lessees to tell them what they may be getting into for the sake of a few thousand dollars a year extra income.

A non-profit 501(c)3 organization called SOAR (Save Our Allegheny Ridges - [saveouralleghenyridges.org](http://saveouralleghenyridges.org)) was formed in 2006 to present the side of the wind turbine story that wind companies and state and federal governments prefer not to tell. SOAR is leading efforts against the projects on Jacks and Stone Mtns. and was centrally active in the efforts

against several previous proposed projects in southcentral Pennsylvania, four of which were eventually terminated. A Facebook group called *Friends of Jacks Mountain* provides updates on the situation on Jacks and Stone for those who wish more information.

The process of developing a wind project, and also of opposing one, is long and drawn-out. These projects have been on the drawing boards for more than two years already, and it may well be another few years before work on the ground would actually start. We will have time to stop these ill-advised projects. However, it requires of those who oppose and who have very meager resources compared to that of international corporations, to persist in their grass-roots efforts. While we contend that the wind projects planned for Jacks and Stone Mts. are ill-advised, we nevertheless recognize the potential value of wind energy as a source of renewable energy. We urge wind companies to consult with habitat and wildlife specialists in the earliest stages of project planning so that sites can be utilized that will have minimal impact on biodiversity.

~ Greg Grove  
Huntingdon, PA

*Kiesecker JM, Evans JS, Fargione J, Doherty K, Foresman KR, et al. (2011) Win-Win for Wind and Wildlife: A Vision to Facilitate Sustainable Development. PLoS ONE 6(4): e17566 doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0017566*

*Pagel, J.E., Kritz, K.J., Millsap, B.A., Murphy, R.K., Kershner, E.L., and Covington, S. 2013. Bald Eagle and Golden Eagle Mortalities at Wind Energy Facilities in the Contiguous United States. Journal of Raptor Research 47:311-315.*

*Smallwood, K.S. and Karas, B. 2009. Bird mortality in the Altamont Pass Wind Resource Area. Journal of Wildlife Management 72:215-223.*



Laura Jackson, incoming JVAS President, presents the 2014 Conservation Award to Ron Singer, founder of the Jacks Mountain Hawk Watch

## THE 2014 JVAS CONSERVATION AWARD

The Juniata Valley Audubon Society 2014 Conservation Award was presented to Ron Singer, founder of the Jacks Mountain Hawk Watch at our Annual Banquet in April. Ron started watching migrating birds on Jacks Mountain in Mifflin Co. almost 40 years ago, before many people knew that the mountains in the ridge and valley province in Pennsylvania were critical flyways for thousands of birds. Ron's particular interest was documenting the hawks and eagles that migrate over Jacks each year. Ron is still very active today, as he is the main facilitator and compiler of the Hawk Watch. Ron organizes a fall hawk watch each year, and all data is sent to the Hawk Migration Association of North America (HMANA). You can access this data at <http://hawkcount.org/siteinfo.php?rsite=104>

Because of his love of the mountains that surround him, Ron has helped with Mid-State Trail maintenance and he was instrumental in organizing a large scale clean up project along the sides of Jacks Mountain Overlook which removed a huge amount of trash that had been dumped there for decades.

Ron spends innumerable hours on top of Jacks sharing his expert identification skills and knowledge of raptors with everyone who stops during the migration season! His leadership and dedication to the Jacks Mountain Hawk Watch has also ignited a larger group of people to form known as *Friends of Jacks Mountain*. This new organization is a community action group, formed because the Jacks Mountain Hawk Watch is threatened by industrial wind turbine development on the mountain.

The Juniata Valley Audubon Society 2014 Conservation Award honors Ron's dedication to observing and documenting raptor migration, as well as founding and maintaining the Hawk Watch at Jacks Mountain.

You can learn more about the Jacks Mountain Hawk Watch at <https://sites.google.com/site/jacksmountainhawkwatch/home>

## ***Emerald Ash Borer Bad for Ash, Boon for Birds***

by Laura Jackson

The emerald ash borer (EAB) is an uninvited guest at our house. Thirty-three mature ash trees right around our house are in the throes of death. We've lived under these trees for 26 years. We've benefitted from their shade and admired their stature. They have stoically accepted the addition of wildlife boxes, which have attracted a number of inhabitants over the years: both gray squirrels and flying squirrels have sought refuge. One September, we watched a gray squirrel carrying a young squirrel in her mouth. She emerged from the surrounding woods, climbed up a tree near our house and stuffed her baby into one of our squirrel boxes. She made three trips, each time carrying a baby in her mouth. I guess she liked the proximity to bird feeders and the new digs must have been attractive. Bluebirds, white-breasted nuthatches, chickadees, yellow-shafted flickers, and even a colony of honey bees have used the boxes to raise their young – all supported by white ash trees firmly rooted in the ground all around our house.

Since emerald ash borers live under the bark of ash trees, their damage is invisible for a few years. After one to three years, the beetle larvae girdle the tree, which kills it. When the half-inch long metallic green adult beetle emerges from the tree, it leaves a little D-shaped exit hole, but that is not obvious at all. What is obvious is a condition called “bird peck,” or bark flaking. All of our 33 white ash trees have this condition. Think of it as tree dandruff – flecks of bark are lying around the base of the trunk – easily visible on top of the winter snow. The bark dandruff is a result of birds pecking holes into the tree, searching

for insects. We've observed that the bark flaking starts on the upper trunk of the ash trees, so it is easily visible.



The flaking bark is a sure sign of emerald ash borer infection.

It isn't just our ash trees that are dying. We see bird peck or bark flaking on ash trees everywhere we drive in central Pennsylvania. The newly exposed layer of bark is much lighter, so the light tan color is in sharp contrast to the darker outer bark. Ash trees are dying by the millions, killed by emerald ash borers. The tiny green beetles were first discovered in Detroit in 2002. It is thought they were in packing crates imported from... you guessed it... CHINA. Ash trees in China are more resistant to emerald ash borers, but they are deadly to our ash trees. All species of ash are affected and already tens of millions of ash trees have been killed. The U.S. Forest Service estimates that 8 billion trees in the U.S. are at risk. There are 308 million ash trees in Pennsylvania, which comprise 3.6% of the forest cover.

DCNR has developed a community training series, as many towns have extensive plantings of ash trees. I remember reading years ago about all the green ash planted in Altoona. There are insecticide options to

protect prize ash trees, but treatment is expensive. Go to: [www.dcnr.state.pa.us/forestry/insectsdisease/eab/](http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/forestry/insectsdisease/eab/) for more information.

We plan to let some of our ash trees stand as snags, but only the ones further from the house. Most of the ash in our yard are a hazard to the house, since dead ash trees are brittle and fall over fairly soon, so they will be removed.

Meanwhile, woodpeckers and nuthatches are in a feeding frenzy. More food means more birds. Michigan and Ohio are seeing significant increases in woodpecker populations: downy, red-bellied, and other woodpeckers are increasing, thanks to the extra food, which can support higher populations. Still, I'd rather have the ash trees.



This close-up shows the small holes where woodpeckers have excavated in dying and dead ash trees.



## Healthy Forests for Birds and People

September 19 – 20  
Wellsboro, PA

This conference will be a statewide gathering of Audubon members and other interested public for learning, sharing and taking action to ensure that Pennsylvania's forests remain as healthy habitats for wildlife, headwater sources of clean streams, and enjoyable places for recreation. Included will be sessions on the birds that depend on Pennsylvania forests for survival, how to create bird-friendly yards and communities, latest research on the value of Pennsylvania's urban forests for bird migration and rural forests as bird nurseries, impacts on our forests from fracking operations, and what individuals and groups are doing locally and statewide to make a difference.

For more information, contact:  
Paul Zeph at  
pzeph@audubon.org;  
717-574-6668.

## JVAS Field Trips

Saturday, May 31

*Big Valley Vista*

Did you ever wonder what things look like atop the Seven Mountains, as you pass by the rest stop while driving through? Meet at 1 PM at the Rt. 322 Seven Mountains Rest Stop, with a trailhead marker and an informative and amusing map. It is located on the west-bound side of the highway between Laurel Creek Reservoir and Seven Mountains Campground. We will have a pleasant and easy hike to the Big Valley Vista viewing area where the mystery will be solved. Upon arriving you will find a stone promanade conveniently placed leading up to the lookouts; we have been told it was assembled with materials brought in by helicopter. The view is amazing. After these incredible views of the Big Valley, Route 322 twisting through the gap, the water reservoir and more, we shall make a visit to the Seven Mountains Winery tucked away in the woods a short distance from the trailhead. Follow us afterwards to either Duffy's Tavern or Mt. Nittany Inn for a delicious repast as we relive our day in discussion. Trip leader, GerneyLee Carter: Gernilee@gmail.com.

Saturday, August 9

*Allegheny Front & Shingle Mill Trails*

Meet at 9:30 AM at the beach parking lot of Black Moshannon State Park, where the shuttle deploys for this easy-moderate 4-mile hike to view the area's Cardinal Flower. Pack lunch/water. For more info or in case of inclement weather, please contact our guide, Terri Davis: nugenie@aol.com, or 814-355-3345.

## 2014 Pennsylvania Audubon Member Assembly

**Join us!**

Sept. 19 & 20  
Wellsboro, PA

## Healthy Forests for Birds and People

Come together with other Auduboners and experts for learning, sharing and taking action to ensure that Pennsylvania's forests remain healthy habitats for wildlife, headwater sources of clean streams, and enjoyable places for recreation.

Sessions will include:

- ◆ Birds that depend on Pennsylvania forests
- ◆ How to create bird-friendly yards and communities
- ◆ Latest research on the value of Pennsylvania's urban forests for bird migration and rural forests as bird nurseries
- ◆ Impacts on our forests from fracking operations
- ◆ What individuals and groups are doing locally and statewide to make a difference.



Enjoy Pine Creek Gorge — known as PA's Grand Canyon — in its autumn splendor! Birding, biking, fishing, hiking!

Local hospitality and field trips by members of the Tiadaghton Audubon Society.

Plan an extra day or two and enjoy the sights and wildness of northern PA!

For details & registration: <http://pa.audubon.org>; 610-666-5593 x 110



Black bear cubs and mama captured in  
photos by *Alan Swann*

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