

# The Gnatcatcher

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## Newsletter of Juniata Valley Audubon

Vol. XLVI, No. 5 — November / December 2014

Published bimonthly (except for July and August)

as a benefit for members of the...

JUNIATA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY



## CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT IS AROUND THE CORNER

Written By: Steve Bonta

The annual Juniata Valley Audubon Society's Christmas Bird Count will be held Saturday, December 20<sup>th</sup>, with a tally supper to follow at Marzoni's Brick Oven and Brewing Company at 1830 East Pleasant Valley Boulevard, Altoona. The count circle is centered on Culp in Sinking Valley, and includes such hotspots as Canoe Creek State Park, all of Sinking Valley, and the Kettle. Every year dozens of birders count numbers and species of birds found within the count circle, either on foot or by car, or by staying home and counting visitors to backyard feeders. Over the years, species totals have ranged from the low 40s in bad weather or poor food conditions (a low wild berry crop, for example), to the mid-60s in good weather and optimal conditions. Some years have been cold and snowy, and have featured winter visitors from the north like crossbills and redpolls, while other years have seen warm, sunny weather at the end of a mild autumn and have turned up summer holdovers like catbirds, phoebes, and yellow-rumped warblers. We've found many remarkable birds over the years, including golden and bald eagles, an osprey, and even a wintering Baltimore oriole. Last year's count was carried out in unusually poor weather – rain and fog were the order of the day – but still yielded a few rarities like a rusty blackbird.

Participation in the count is free, but please contact compiler Steve Bonta at 814-684-1175 for more information and to be assigned a count area (to promote accuracy, different areas in the circle are assigned to different parties, to avoid multiple counts of the same birds). Be sure to keep a record of the number of hours spent counting and the distance covered on foot and in car, in addition to tallying the bird numbers and species that you find. We hope to make this year's count the most successful ever!

**See Back of Newsletter for RSVP Form**



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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## Field Trip Report: Exploring the Old Loggers Trail at Raystown Lake

Written By Field Trip Leader, Kristin Joivell

On a recent field trip, JVAS members traveled to the Raystown Lake region to explore the varied habitats on the Old Loggers Trail. Highlights of the trip included sightings of a tussock moth caterpillar, pileated woodpecker, porcupine and great blue heron. Attendees walked through forest, shale barrens, and lake side habitats while noticing the changes fall is bringing to the area. A side trip on the Sheep Rock Spur Trail led to a sighting of the rarely seen shale barren evening primrose. After the event, a visit to Boxer's Café in nearby Huntingdon was organized to sample from their organic and locally grown menu items.





Copyright: Laura Jackson

The bubbling boulder just outside my kitchen window provides bathing and drinking water for birds; the sound of water attracts many different species, especially if there is plenty of cover nearby.



Copyright: Laura Jackson

Standing dead trees called snags, and living den trees provide shelter for a lot of birds like this young Eastern Screech owl.

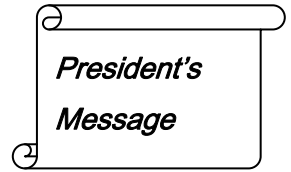


Copyright: Laura Jackson

JVAS member Stan Kotala monitors 25 bluebird boxes at Fort Roberdeau.

## President's Message: What You Can Do To Help Protect Birds

-Laura Jackson



We can all try harder to make the world a better place for the birds. Here are 5 important steps that we should take to make sure birds continue to be an important part of our lives:

### Build A Backyard for the Birds

Healthy birds will be better equipped to face the challenges of a warming world if we take action in our own backyard. If you have a dying tree, keep it as a snag – remove dead limbs if they are a safety risk. Install a bird bath or a bubbling boulder. The recirculating water in our boulder attracts many species of birds – especially migrating warblers in the spring and fall. Plant native plants and remove non-native ones. Increase bird biodiversity by creating different habitats: a wall of loose rocks, a brush pile, a rain garden, and even a rotten log will sustain birds or the animals that they eat.

Learn more at [findnativeplants.com](http://findnativeplants.com) and [athome.audubon.org](http://athome.audubon.org)

### Get Involved with your local Hawk Watch and Important Bird Area (IBA)

You don't have to be a bird expert to support these vital projects. Visit these areas, get to know what groups are working to support them, and ask what you can do to help. Volunteer to help with IBA restoration, cleanup projects, field trips, and monitoring. Canoe Creek Watershed is an IBA and can be easily explored at Canoe Creek State Park. You can access a list of birds that have been observed in the IBA on the JVAS website: [jvas.org](http://jvas.org)

### Support Organizations that Protect Bird Habitat

Our health depends on healthy birds. Remember how coal miners used canaries as a way to test for toxic gases in the mines? Birds are sensitive indicators that tell us if our environment is healthy.

One such organization that protects bird habitats is the Fort Roberdeau Association. The Fort is not only a living history museum, it also provides important habitat for grassland birds. We don't have many suitable areas for grassland birds in Pennsylvania, but Fort Roberdeau does. Grasshopper Sparrows, Eastern Meadowlarks, and Bobolinks are a few species that benefit from grassland habitat. Fort Roberdeau has 22 acres! Learn more about their Grassland Conservation Plan at [fortroberdeau.org](http://fortroberdeau.org)

### Go with Rooftop Solar

Although we have a lot of cloudy days in Pennsylvania, we actually get 50% more sunshine per day than Germany, the world leader in solar installations. When I tried to "go solar" two years ago, I found it was too expensive. Offers have changed since then, and some companies don't require any payment up front. One option is to pay as you go for your solar power, which is less expensive than what standard utilities charge. Unfortunately, I have not been able to find any companies that are willing to do this type of installation in our part of Pennsylvania. Please contact me if you are leasing your rooftop solar system.

### Spread the Word about Birds

Share your concerns about the serious dangers that birds face in a warming world. Let local policy makers know what can be done to identify and conserve areas that are vital to birds and biodiversity. As I write this, our state legislators are considering House Bill 1565, which would remove protection along high-quality and exceptional value streams. If this bill passes, it is a step back for habitats, clean streams, and wildlife. Contact decision makers to let them know how you feel. Your voice matters! Visit JVAS on Facebook to get timely updates on conservation issues, projects, and field trips. If you aren't a Facebook fan, consider joining the JVAS List Serv: Write to [LISTSERV@LISTS.PSU.EDU](mailto:LISTSERV@LISTS.PSU.EDU) and in the text of your message (not the subject line), write: SUBSCRIBE JVAS-L

# STILL ANOTHER AWARD FOR THE "COLDWATER CRUSADER"

Written by: Charlie Hoyer

At Juniata Valley Audubon's spring banquet in April 2011, Bill Anderson, president of the Little Juniata River Association (LJRA), was presented with the 2011 JVAS Conservation Award for his efforts in monitoring, preserving, and improving the Little Juniata River and its tributaries. Later that year, Anderson accepted a conservation award from the Blair County Conservation Officers Association for the LJRA. In 2012, he received an award from the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission for facilitating the acquisition of the Sandy Run wetlands near Pinecroft. Then, a year later, he was the recipient of the 2013 Outstanding Conservationist Award by the Blair Conservation District at its annual banquet.

Now, in 2014, Anderson has been recognized by Field and Stream magazine as a "Hero of Conservation" -- one of six finalists across the country. Field and Stream had awarded the six finalists each \$5000; however, Anderson wrote a personal check to the LJRA in the full amount of his award, claiming that it was a team that had made it all possible.

The Little Juniata River has had a long history of pollution and abuse from the many towns along its course and the railroad line that parallels it. In 1972, resulting floods from Hurricane Agnes scoured the Little Juniata, thereby removing 100 years of pollution and giving birth to today's trout fishery.

Destruction from pollution didn't end in 1972, however. A high-water event in 1996 washed toxins into the river, destroying the aquatic insect population for miles. Fish were starving. Fishermen rarely caught large fish in the Little Juniata; they caught small fingerling brown trout that the state had stocked by the thousands.

Then, following his retirement, Anderson got involved. He knew the river needed someone to watch over it -- someone who cared to give a voice to a river that didn't have one. So he started the Little Juniata River Association. Since then, he's spent nine years organizing restoration work and advocating for better protection of the coldwater resource. The LJRA's mission is to "Monitor, preserve, and improve the Little Juniata River and its tributaries as coldwater resources." The organization certainly fulfills its mission! It's currently one of the most accomplished fisheries conservation organizations in the country.

Through the LJRA's work, the section of the river from Ironville downstream to the mouth of Spruce Creek has been designated Class A Wild Trout Waters, and the river is no longer stocked. Counts of redds (depressions in the streambed created by spawning trout) are conducted each year to monitor the wild trout. Miles of stream access have been procured for the public's use -- forever. Cold, limestone tributaries have been purchased so they can be protected from development. No-kill regulations have been put in place to stop the removal of large breeder fish. Stream banks are being stabilized and protected from erosion to create better spawning habitat for brown trout. More than 1000 native trees and shrubs have been planted to enhance the forested buffer. Finally, a river cleanup is conducted twice each year.

Without Anderson's leadership and vision, many of these projects may not have been accomplished. The Little Juniata River is now one of Pennsylvania's shining gems and one of the best trout streams in the East.

We're pleased that Bill Anderson is continuing to be recognized for his undying efforts in bettering Blair and Huntingdon County's environment!

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## UPCOMING FIELD TRIPS...

SEE WEBSITE FOR MORE INFO

- [Allegheny Front Hawk Watch](#) - Sat Nov 08, 2014 - Sun Nov 09, 2014 - 10:00 am - 5:00 pm
- [Henry-Baker Nature Preserve and Peace Chapel](#) - Sat Nov 15, 2014 - 1:00 pm - 5:00 pm
- [Christmas Bird Count](#) - Sat Dec 20, 2014 - All Day

## PROGRAM MEETINGS

Our monthly program meetings are free and open to everyone. Our usual location is the [Bellwood-Antis Public Library](#) and refreshments are provided. The programs last about an hour, following a brief sharing of conservation news, wildlife sightings and club business. Audience members with time constraints are able to slip out at any time, and late-comers are welcome as well.

- **Tuesday, Nov. 18 at 7:00 pm** "Greenland 2013 - Camping, Culture, Hiking, Kayaking" by Gary Thornbloom



# Join or Renew your Chapter Membership with *Juniata Valley Audubon Society*

**Membership Year runs from January 1<sup>st</sup> to December 31<sup>st</sup>.**

**Chapter:** A Chapter membership does more to support the JVAS. All Chapter membership dues stay with the JVAS and are used locally in the Juniata Valley for conservation, education, and advocacy in Blair, Huntingdon, Centre, Bedford, and Mifflin Counties.

The JVAS is a tax-exempt, nonprofit organization, so all donations are deductible (and gratefully accepted). JVAS membership provides you with the following benefits:

- Notification of the Juniata Valley Audubon’s exciting activities, monthly nature programs, field trips, and other events.
- Subscription to the bimonthly chapter newsletter, *The Gnatcatcher*. (But we’d appreciate it if you’re willing to forego the print edition and accept the digital version.)
- 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.

**Become a JVAS Chapter member at one of the annual membership categories as follows:**

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

**Membership Year runs from January 1<sup>st</sup> to December 31<sup>st</sup>**

**Make your check payable to the “JUNIATA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY”**

**Mail to:**

Charlie Hoyer, Membership Chair  
Juniata Valley Audubon Society  
P.O. Box 42  
Tyrone, PA 16686-0042

**JVAS Member:**

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone No. \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

**Please check one:**

- Yes, I will accept the digital copy of *The Gnatcatcher*.  No, I prefer to receive a paper copy.

## Nature Rambles (Easy Walks as opposed to Hikes)

We would also like to see some field trips offered that do not require very much walking. This would allow time for more bird-watching and wildflower identification. While all ages are encouraged to attend, these trips would allow our more senior members to explore nature, but at a slower pace. If you would like to organize a Nature Ramble for March or April, please send details to Deb in early February 2015, for publication in the March issue of *The Gnatcatcher*. A Nature Ramble planned for May or June should be sent to Deb in early April.

JVAS Conservation Chair Stan Kotala led a bird walk at Fort Roberdeau last June before the JVAS Annual Picnic. The group enjoyed learning about many of the native plants in the forest.



## Natural History Road Tours

JVAS plans to offer thematic Natural History Road Tours this spring. Participants will follow the trip leader, driving to locations where they will make observations close to their vehicles without having to do a lot of walking. The Road Tour should be a loop drive, so people can car pool.

If you decide to plan a Road Tour, please contact Field Trip Chair Deb Tencer with details. Descriptions for Road Tours in March or April should be sent to Deb in early February, 2015, for publication in the March issue of *The Gnatcatcher*. Road Tours planned for May or June should be sent to Deb in early April.



A Scenic Vistas Road Tour could include a stop at the Altar on Jacks Mountain in Mifflin County, the site of the Jacks Mountain Hawk Watch. There are spectacular views of Big Valley to the north and Ferguson Valley to the south.

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## Poetry Corner



We all have moments that inspire us to transcribe our feelings – joy, hope, fear, despair, anticipation, gratitude...Whatever it is that pushes us to write is always better shared than kept in a dark box. Send your nature poetry to Laura Jackson for future issues of *The Gnatcatcher*.

My concerns over HB 1576 prompted me to write this poem last winter, when some of our state legislators were pushing to weaken protection for Pennsylvania's endangered species. Fortunately, thousands of people let their legislators know that they opposed it. To date, the bill has not passed.

### Who speaks for the silent ones?

-Laura Jackson 2014

I have heard their voices  
The wolf howling under a full moon  
The whip-poor-will's loud call in the forest night  
A loon's call cascades in eerie echoes over a northern pond.

The bull elk bugles to assert his dominance.  
When the cow elk loses her calf she calls to it  
over and over again  
While the grizzly bear growls in the midst of feasting.

Others are silent.  
The spotted salamander crawls in the dark earth,  
only to appear each spring  
On a stubborn march to mate in the vernal pool.  
The monarch's summer flight from flower to flower  
is but a prelude until it catches

The winds and flies high with eagles  
On its long journey south each fall.  
The ancient oak groans when stroked by the wind,  
But otherwise stands without a sound.  
All trees are silent until the sharp thud of their flesh hits the  
ground.

They cry out only in the throes of death.  
The mountains looming over us never speak of the  
Wonders they remember when the earth was younger  
And their throats were full of fire.

Who will speak for those who are silent?  
Who will sing to share their story?  
Who will cry for the death of so many who have fallen?  
Who will shout to save the silent ones still standing?

## FIELD GUIDE TO THE FUTURE: NEARLY HALF OF NORTH AMERICA'S BIRDS AT RISK FROM GLOBAL WARMING

—ADAPTED FROM AN ARTICLE BY NATIONAL AUDUBON

Nearly half of the bird species in the continental U.S. and Canada are threatened by global warming. Many of these species could go extinct without decisive action to protect their habitats and reduce the severity of global warming. That's the startling conclusion reached by Audubon scientists in a new study.

Here in Pennsylvania, birds threatened by global warming include Brown Creepers, Mallards, and even the Ruffed Grouse, our state bird.

Of 588 bird species examined in the study, 314 are at risk. Of those, 126 species are at risk of severe declines by 2050, and a further 188 species face the same fate by 2080, with numerous extinctions possible if global warming is allowed to erase the havens birds occupy today.

“The greatest threat our birds face today is global warming,” said Audubon Chief Scientist Gary Langham, who led the investigation. “That’s our unequivocal conclusion after seven years of painstakingly careful and thorough research. Global warming threatens the basic fabric of life on which birds – and the rest of us – depend, and we have to act quickly and decisively to avoid catastrophe for them and us.”

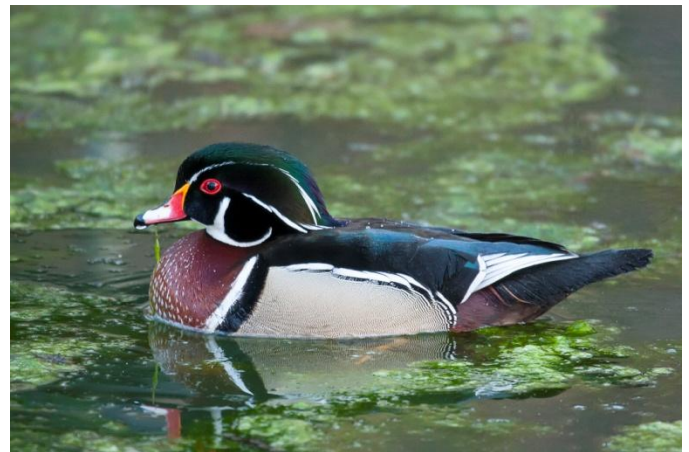
To understand the links between where birds live and the climatic conditions that support them, Langham and other Audubon ornithologists analyzed 30 years of historical North American climate data and tens of thousands of historical bird records from the U.S. Geological Survey’s North American Breeding Bird Survey and the Audubon Christmas Bird Count. Understanding those links then allowed scientists to project where birds are likely to be able to survive – and not survive – in the future.

The study also reveals areas that are likely to remain stable for birds even as climate changes, enabling Audubon to identify “stronghold” areas that birds will need to survive in the future.

The result is a roadmap for bird conservation in coming decades under a warming climate. The study provides a key entry point for Audubon’s greater engagement on the urgent issue of global warming. Responding to the magnitude of the threat to our birds, Audubon is greatly expanding its climate initiative, aiming to engage a larger and more diverse set of voices in support of protecting birds.

Solutions will include personal choices to conserve energy and create backyard bird habitat, local action to create community climate action plans, state-based work to increase rooftop solar and energy efficiency, and our work in Important Bird Areas and other efforts to protect and expand bird habitats.

If you'd like to see the entire list of birds that are at risk, visit [Audubon.org/Climate](http://Audubon.org/Climate).

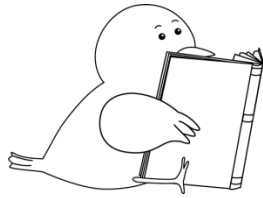


Copyright: Mike Jackson

One of our most beautiful waterfowl, the Wood Duck, is threatened by global warming. They are one of the few duck species equipped with strong claws, which allow them to grip bark and perch in trees.

## Off the Shelf

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We hope "Off the Shelf" will appear in every issue of *The Gnatcatcher*, but that will only happen if you send in your reviews of natural history books. We also welcome feedback. Email Laura Jackson to contribute a book review, or if you have a comment about a book that was reviewed. Good reading!

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**The Global Forest** by Diana Beresford-Kroeger  
(Viking, 2010)

Reviewed by Laura Jackson

The book is a mystical blend of science, folklore, and poetry. Trees are the main topic of each chapter, which Beresford-Kroeger presents as a stand-alone short story. Some of the writing is designed to draw the reader into a skillfully painted world where trees form the very essence of life. Other topics are more factual, but all have a wonderfully unique perspective. I read only a few chapters at one sitting, which allowed time for me to contemplate some of the surprising information. Beresford-Kroeger is a botanist and medical biochemist who decided to pursue writing, so she weaves some fairly technical science into her stories. I imagine it can be quite frustrating to some readers, as she does not explain some of the scientific terms. I did not like the absence of references, either, since some of her statements demand further research. She states on page 37, "Simply by holding a green walnut, *J. nigra*, a young child will receive protection from early childhood leukemia." I'd love to read the research on that! I would recommend the book, though, as it is a thought-provoking, holistic story about the importance of trees.

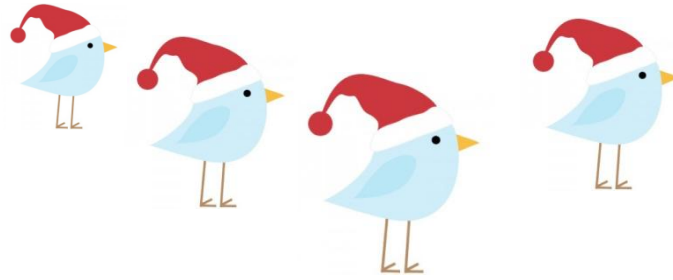
**Feral** by George Monbiot

(Penguin, 2013/University of Chicago Press 2014)

Reviewed by Dave Bonta

This book has two different subtitles. The British edition, which I read, is subtitled "Searching for Enchantment on the Frontiers of Rewilding," while the American edition is subtitled "Rewilding the Land, the Sea, and Human Life." Either way, it's a terrific book: a first-person account of the author's quest for wildness and wild experiences in his native Britain, interwoven with an impassioned yet scientific (and extensively documented) brief for rewilding. Monbiot is best known as a political columnist for the Guardian, but he studied biology at university and started off as an environmental reporter, and it's obvious he's a nature nerd and outdoorsman from way back. But more than anyone else I've read on wild lands conservation, including Dave Foreman, Monbiot takes a nuanced approach to the problems of balancing human needs with the preservation of the natural world. He tackles head-on some of the elitist attitudes that have plagued preservationist arguments in the past, and presents rewilding as—among other things—something we need to do for our own mental health. The book is also a great introduction to nature in the British Isles, cutting through a lot of the crap peddled by more mainstream British conservationists who try to ignore the fact that the islands were once covered in temperate rainforest, and that vast landscapes have been "sheep wrecked", as Monbiot calls it. American readers will be shocked at just how backward farming interests in Britain can be, blocking even the most innocuous species reintroductions and ecological restoration attempts and fighting to preserve a tamed and diminished landscape at all costs. Read *Feral* and you'll never complain about Pennsylvania developers again.





## Come one, come all to the JVAS Christmas Bird Count Dinner

**December 20, 2014 at 5:30 PM**

Marzoni's Brick Oven & Brewing Co. at Pinecroft  
1830 E. Pleasant Valley Blvd, Altoona, PA 16602

You don't have to be a Counter to join us for dinner!

The meal will be buffet style with  
3 delicious Italian entrées from the Banquet Menu:

- Eggplant Parmigiana (Meatless)
- Beef Tips Marsala with mashed potatoes and vegetables
  - Chicken Alfredo

Fresh Garden Salad  
Unlimited Bread Sticks  
Soft drinks, Juice, Coffee, and Tea (Free Refills)  
Hand Crafted Beer is available at an additional cost

**Only \$18 per person (includes gratuity)**

-----Reservation and Payment Due by Tuesday, Nov. 18-----

✂ CUT

✂ CUT

### JVAS Christmas Bird Count Dinner

Make Check Payable to Laura Jackson and mail to  
8621 Black Valley Road, Everett, PA 15537  
Or pay at the Nov. 18 JVAS meeting

\_\_\_\_\_ is reserving \_\_\_\_\_ dinner(s) at \$18 each for a total of \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
(Name – please print)





Raystown Lake – Enjoying a Fall Afternoon!

*Return Service Requested*

TYRONE, PA 16686-0042

PO BOX 42

JUNIATA VALLEY AUDUBON