

# The Gnatcatcher

## Newsletter of Juniata Valley Audubon

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as a benefit for members of the...

JUNIATA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY



### President's Message

## President's Message:

-Laura Jackson

### Add Your Voice to an International Outcry: Take Action to Protect Amherst Island

My visit to Amherst Island in Lake Ontario was one of the birding highlights of a birding trip to Ontario sponsored by the Pennsylvania Society of Ornithology last February. Amherst Island is world-famous for Owl Woods, which we did not get to visit due to the deep snow, but we saw 10 different Snowy Owls in just a few hours on the island, as well as Rough-legged Hawks, a Northern Harrier, and a juvenile Bald Eagle. The stark snowy landscape was dotted with quaint houses, farms, and old stone walls. We also saw something that was very disturbing: signs protesting the industrial wind turbines proposed for the island. I had a chance to talk very briefly with an island resident as we were waiting to board the ferry to go back to the mainland. She and many other island residents were against the project and she encouraged me to learn more about potential impacts to bats, birds, turtles, and insects.

Just recently, Ontario's Ministry of Environment and Climate Change approved the Amherst Island Wind Project, much to the dismay of major conservation groups in Ontario and in the U.S.

I'm asking all of you to take action to stop this ill-conceived wind project slated for one of the most important bird areas in North America. Amherst Island is a Global and Continentally Significant Important Bird Area.

#### What can you do?

1. Email Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne at [premier@ontario.ca](mailto:premier@ontario.ca) and ask that she direct the IESO to cancel the FIT contract with Windlectric Inc. in the same manner that the IESO cancelled the FIT contract for the Horizon Wind Project. Copy Bruce Campbell, CEO IESO

[bruce.campbell@ieso.ca](mailto:bruce.campbell@ieso.ca). Please record your email, document any response, and advise [protectai@kos.net](mailto:protectai@kos.net). You may also wish to write directly to the Premier:

Premier Kathleen Wynne  
Government of Ontario  
Whitney Block  
99 Wellesley Street West  
Toronto, ON M7A 1A1  
Fax: 416-325-3745

The IESO is Ontario's "Independent Electricity System Operator" and the FIT contract refers to the Fee-in Tariff Program that IESO offers to wind companies.

2. Email the Honorable Bill Mauro, Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry at [minister.mnr@ontario.ca](mailto:minister.mnr@ontario.ca) Ask that he revoke the Overall Benefit Permit for the destruction of grassland bird habitat on Amherst Island and listen to the concerns of Nature Canada, Ontario Nature, Kingston Field Naturalists and the American Bird Conservancy.

3. Visit the Association to Protect Amherst Island website at [www.protectamherstisland.ca](http://www.protectamherstisland.ca) for up-to-date information and donate funds for the legal battle.

4. Email me to learn more about the importance of Amherst Island - in addition to wintering birds, it is home to many special bat, reptile and insect species. I'll send you more information.

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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## Calling All Christmas Bird Counters!

The JVAS Blair County Christmas Bird Count (CBC), centered around Culp, will be held on Saturday, December 19, with a tally dinner (aka "tally rally") to be held at Marzoni's Brick Oven and Brewing Company at 1830 East Pleasant Valley Boulevard, Altoona, starting at 6 P.M. The dinner is open to all, so you can attend even if you can't help with the CBC.

We hope YOU will be a counter this year! We are always in need of more participants, so check with birder friends and invite them to participate, too. Participation is free. In addition to field surveys, we need feeder watchers. If you live in the count circle (within 7.5 miles of Culp), you are encouraged to record the birds you see on your property or at your feeder. Please contact compiler Laura Jackson if you would like to participate. Counters will be assigned a section of the circle to cover, so if you have a favorite area, be sure to sign up early. Register by calling Laura at 814-652-9268 or email [mljackson2@embarqmail.com](mailto:mljackson2@embarqmail.com). You will receive a map showing which part of the circle to cover, a species checklist, and pointers on any bird hot spots that might be in your part of the circle. We will assign the count areas in early December, so if you have a favorite area that you want to cover, contact Laura before December 6.

There are 3 other Christmas Bird Counts in our area that need participants:

**Huntingdon Co. CBC** on December 20, 2015 is centered around Donation, PA.

Contact compiler Deb Grove: 814-643-3295 or [dsg4@psu.edu](mailto:dsg4@psu.edu)

**Bedford Co. CBC** on December 26, 2015 is centered around Manns Choice, PA.

Contact compilers Mike and Laura Jackson: 814-652-9268 or [mljackson2@embarqmail.com](mailto:mljackson2@embarqmail.com)

**Raystown CBC**: Contact compiler Greg Grove for more details: [gwg2@psu.edu](mailto:gwg2@psu.edu)



It isn't a fancy feeder, but this Baltimore Oriole doesn't care. We're just glad it stuck around for the Christmas Bird Count in Bedford on December 17, 2011.

*JVAS is lucky to have Mark Bonta serving as vice-president. Our group certainly benefits from his conservation ethic, and so do other groups even in such far off places as Honduras. We are sharing a recent interview with Penn State News, since we thought you'd be interested in Mark's conservation efforts. Mark is also leading a bird conservation tour to Honduras in February. Mike and I are excited to be part of this trip.*

## The Why of Where

**Geographer practices community-based conservation at home and abroad.**

By Therese Boyd Originally published by Penn State News

When asked what he does in his work, Mark Bonta says, "I mostly talk to people." How hard can that be? Of course there's more to the story. An assistant professor of earth science at Penn State Altoona, Bonta does far more than just engage people in conversation. His work as a geographer encompasses environmental science, ethnography, natural disasters, and conservation—and that's only a partial list. He explains the diversity as critical to his work: "Geographers are synthesists and generalists—we have to be multidisciplinary."

Bonta's main focus is community-based conservation in Honduras, a country he has been working in since a "chance assignment in the Peace Corps" more than twenty years ago, he says. "They match you with a request for certain skills and then you go to the host country and train for three months. I was matched up directly with Honduran biologists who were trying to manage national parks with little to no resources." Bonta's role was — and continues today as a founding member of the Honduran Conservation Coalition (HOCC, [honduranconservationcoalition.com](http://honduranconservationcoalition.com)) — to work within communities in Honduras, with the residents, to help solve the environmental problems local populations face. "The idea is that local communities be involved in managing and protecting the environment, and this is supported by Honduran law."

This is where Bonta "talks to people," as he says. "In ethnography you're trained to have open-ended conversations." Through those interactions, and learning what a particular community needs, "we are able to provide certain services and work directly with them." He stresses that his role is not to go in, tell people what to do, and leave. Instead, members of HOCC work with communities to listen and problem-solve together. "Our connection through education and knowledge is a very powerful thing."

What type of issues present themselves? First, Bonta says, there's "the environmental struggle and then the general struggle. The country is so close to the land. Communities need to figure out the best way to preserve their natural resources." Honduras was hit by a very strong Hurricane Mitch in 1998, had a military coup in 2009, and is constantly dealing with development issues and the residual environmental impacts. Of course, watersheds are a major concern but, just as important, a community may want to protect itself from a large hydroelectric project that would flood local farms, or from a logging company that would clear-cut a local forest.

HOCC's role includes both education and support. "We've had requests for workshops in communities. They might ask how they can set up a protected area. That [type of project] can be community managed. We worked with Catholic clergy there, who nowadays are often big forces for protection of environment and community, passing skills on to them. This is a way we can do things very quickly without a bureaucracy." Some other workshops serve to educate the public about the impacts of, for example, open-pit iron mining on a local community. "You can have company representatives come in and promise the earth and sky [but the residents have] never seen open-pit mining. They don't have the exposure to it so they just don't know the risks associated with it. But photos and videos are very powerful."

Sometimes the best thing HOCC can offer is data. "Biologists collect and identify new and unusual species, which could be critically important to a community trying to preserve its wildlife and watersheds; they have the data [to support their opposition]." In one specific case, language was the barrier. "When we did research on the cycad, a type of plant, we got funding to translate the final report into Spanish, print it and send it to all the communities we worked with. This isn't standard practice—most scientific reports never make it back to communities. It's amazing to see the effect. They were able to use that for conservation and for protection of critical heritage."

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What Bonta and his cohorts in HOCC do might not be considered “research” in some circles, but he disagrees. What they do is called “participatory action research: you’re doing research but participating at the same time.” He has found time to write two books and numerous articles and chapters based on his research but, he admits, “The more you’re involved with community conservation issues on the ground, the less critical it becomes to see your name in an English-language journal.”

A significant factor in HOCC’s success is the amount of money required for projects, only “a few thousand dollars at a time.” Bonta acknowledges that funding can be a challenge: “We’re in one of the most violent areas in the world, and we don’t shy away from working in difficult places, such as where there is illegal mahogany traffic, or people trying to put in mines. So it’s hard to get long-term sustainable funding. We haven’t had a lot more than operational funds.” He sees larger amounts of money coming from bigger organizations than HOCC, but “many times money being spent is reaching the ground but not making much impact.” Being a small organization has its advantages in lack of red tape: “We take what we can get but we use it very quickly.”

During the school year, of course, Bonta is in the classroom at Penn State Altoona, where he brings in real world examples every chance he gets because geography is “not just a study of places, it’s the why of where.” He says, “My academic career started with 9/11—two weeks after I started teaching, 9/11 happened.” That became a classroom topic, as well as Hurricane Katrina: “I had a license to teach exciting things. I was teaching about the potential effects of the storm [Katrina] in New Orleans while it was in Florida. You can turn anything into a teachable moment.” To give his students the opportunity to understand some of what Honduran communities face, “we do total-immersion role plays and simulate the poverty in Honduras.”

Bonta’s thoughts are never far from what he has experienced in his time in Honduras and what he wants to do next. At the end of the spring semester, he says, “I can’t wait to get down to Honduras, but won’t get there until the end of June. Among other activities, I will be helping set up a new conservation partnership between Juniata Valley Audubon Society, of which I am vice-president, the Honduran Ornithological Association, and a local university. I will also be working with communities in bird education and documentation, and submitting data to eBird [[eBird.org](http://eBird.org)].” And then, come fall, he will bring his experience back to the classroom and teach his students about what he saw and what he did.

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## **Support “our birds” on their wintering grounds by purchasing organic shade coffee from Honduras.**

Cultivated by a small group of farmers in Maracala, Honduras, Lenca coffee is one of the best Arabica coffees in the world. Emilio Garcia and his family have been cultivating coffee since 1915. Now they partner with Sustainable Harvest Specialty Coffee Importers in Portland, Oregon so they can direct market their top quality, organic shade coffee in the U.S. JVAS is partnering with Emilio Garcia to help direct market his family’s coffee. Freshly brewed Lenca coffee will be available at our JVAS monthly meetings.

You can purchase bags of green coffee or medium roast coffee. Green coffee is \$6.00 per 1-pound bag. A 1-pound bag of medium roast coffee is \$12. A 2-pound bag of whole roasted or ground roasted is \$22. Coffee will be served at monthly meetings and will be available for purchase.

**Like Café Lenca at [www.facebook.com/CafeLenca](https://www.facebook.com/CafeLenca)**





## GET AWAY FROM WINTER - TAKE PART IN A BIRDING FOR CONSERVATION TRIP TO HONDURAS!!

**Dates: Feb. 17 - 28, 2016**

**Cost: \$1,500 + airfare**

Are you a birder eager to explore Latin America's hottest emerging destinations, but also interested in helping ensure that the birds and habitats you visit will be around for the future? Do you also want to learn about other aspects of Honduran nature, and experience Honduran culture? And, would you like to travel comfortably, yet save big over other birding tours? The Honduran Conservation Coalition offers you an ethical and affordable trip.

Participants should see over 300 species of birds, a variety of habitats from coast to mid-altitude rain forests, and will visit some outstanding efforts by Hondurans to protect the environment and educate their citizens on birds and conservation.

Dr. Mark Bonta, Vice-President of JVAS and a Penn State Altoona geography professor, is a recognized authority on Honduran culture and nature, with 25 years' experience in Honduras; and Gilberto Flores-Walter, bilingual Honduran birder and coffee farmer as well as the Vice-President of the Honduran Ornithological Association, are trip leaders.

The tour is limited to 10 paying participants, so contact Mark right away if you are interested. There are four spots left as of October 10.

Email Mark Bonta for a trip information packet and registration form: [markabonta@yahoo.com](mailto:markabonta@yahoo.com)

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### JVAS Fall Programs (Free)

**Bellwood-Antis Public Library**

**526 Main Street, Bellwood, PA 16617**

**Phone: 742-8234**

*JVAS programs are presented on the third Tuesday of the month, except in June, July, August, and December. Programs begin at 7:00 PM in the meeting room of the Bellwood-Antis Library.*

Directions: Take Interstate Rt. 99 to the Bellwood/Route 865 Exit (Exit 41). Follow Rt. 865 through the Sheetz/Martin intersection. Proceed about 4 blocks and turn right at the BUSINESS DISTRICT sign. Turn left at the dead end and travel to the stop sign. Continue a short distance; the library will be on your right.

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## Are gray squirrels our most common squirrel?

Find out on November 17.

**November 17, 2015 – Tuesday 7:00 PM.**

***Squirrels of PA: Who, where, and what do they do?***

Carolyn Mahan will describe the behavior, habitat use, and conservation issues surrounding the squirrels of Pennsylvania. Management of rare species of squirrels will also be discussed.

Carolyn, professor of biology and environmental studies and co-coordinator of the Environmental Studies program at Penn State Altoona, has a Ph.D. in Wildlife Science. Her research interests include the study of biodiversity in threatened ecosystems, the effects of human-modified landscapes on wildlife, and behavioral ecology of squirrels. Dr. Mahan has served on the board of directors of the Pennsylvania Wildlife Society and The Clear Water Conservancy and is a past-president of the Pennsylvania Biological Survey. She teaches core courses in biology and environmental studies.



# Recent JVAS Field Trips

You might have missed the JVAS field trips illustrated here, but we hope to see you on some of the trips in November and December. Check out the upcoming ones listed in the newsletter on page 10.

Blue Knob Nature Walk - not many birds, but lots of plants attracted our attention



A Walk in the Wood - Hartley Wood was beautiful, but trail magic was awesome!





Birding Bald Eagle State Park on a foggy, rainy morning in September was a challenge, so a good look at a Nashville warbler was, in large part, due to Mark Bonta's phishing skills. We also saw Magnolia warblers, lots of Cedar Waxwings, Osprey, and Black Ducks - among others.



The Lower Trail: Grannas Station Tree Walk: even though most of the trees along this part of the Lower Trail are the non-native, invasive Tree of Heaven, we found Sycamore, Box Elder, Black Cherry, and Sumac (to name a few). John Lennox was inspired to share a Haiku.





## A Reminder to Renew Your Chapter-only Membership

In

### *Juniata Valley Audubon Society*

Note: You are automatically a member of JVAS when you join National Audubon.

**Chapter-only:** All Chapter-only 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:

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- 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-only 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      |

Make your check payable to the **JUNIATA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY** and mail with this form to:

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

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

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

Phone No. \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail Address \_\_\_\_\_

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

Marcia Bonta

Recently I've read two novels steeped in their natural surroundings. *Above the Waterfall* by poet and novelist Ron Rash takes place in western North Carolina. The chapters are related by two alternating voices.

Becky is a state park ranger, psychologically damaged by a childhood trauma only helped by a summer she spent nearby with her grandparents. To her, life in the Appalachians as an adult is a return to the safety she felt then, and hers is the poetic voice—"the hummingbird nest at the meadow edge—a strawy thimble, the hummingbird's wings—stained glass alive in sudden sunlight shimmer, wildflowers sway in their floral abundance, the grasshopper's rasping papyrus wings..."

Les is the fifty-year-old, soon-to-be-retired county sheriff who is tired, after 30 years, and wants to return to a simpler life in a dream cabin he has designed after making what he thinks were major mistakes in his life.

Both Becky and Les are faced with an environmental mystery. Who poisoned the local trout stream? Neither think the obvious suspect poured kerosene into a stream he loves. How this mystery is solved provides the plot, but I will remember Becky's poetic voice long after I forget the story line of this satisfying novel.

*Martin Marten* by poet, essayist, and novelist Brian Doyle takes place in the backwoods of the Pacific Northwest. Dave is an honorable, young teenager, Martin Marten is a wild creature, facing adversaries, both wild and human, but who is fascinated by Dave.

How both learn and grow and the quirky adults they associate with, including a sympathetic portrait of a trapper, is the major theme of this book. There is a touch of magical realism that appeals to all of us who wish for a similar relationship with a wild creature.

Unfortunately, martens were extirpated from Pennsylvania around 1900 by trapping and the elimination of old growth coniferous and mixed deciduous/coniferous forests, which are their preferred habitats. Smaller than a fisher and larger than a mink, this sleek, handsome member of the Weasel Family only lives in the East in New England, the Adirondacks, northern Michigan and northern Wisconsin now.

But the inquisitive, curious nature of martens is well-known and Brian Doyle's portrayal of Martin is spot on. We can only regret the extirpation of such a fascinating creature from our state after reading this wonderful book.

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## Field trips:

### **Saturday, November 28: Post-Thanksgiving Hike on the Lower Trail from 1:00 – 5:00 pm**

Shed those turkey and pumpkin pie pounds while enjoying an easy, six-mile hike from Mount Etna to Alfarata on the Lower Trail. Meet in the Alfarata Station Trailhead parking lot at 1:00 PM. We'll carpool from Alfarata to the Mt. Etna Trailhead and then hike 6 miles on this rail trail along the Frankstown Branch of the Juniata River back to Alfarata.

For more information, contact Kristin Joivell at 386-6267.

### **Sunday, December 6: Bird Walk and eBird Workshop from 1:00 – 5:00 pm**

This is the second in a series of activities designed to help you know more about the Important Bird Areas (IBAs) located in our chapter's territory. Canoe Creek Watershed IBA contains a jewel of a state park: Canoe Creek State Park, located at 205 Canoe Creek Road, Hollidaysburg, PA. Meet Mark Bonta and Laura Jackson at the park's Education Center in Canoe for a bird walk from 1 – 3 pm, followed by an eBird Workshop in the Education Center from 3 – 5 pm. Learn how to be a Citizen Scientist by entering your bird observations in eBird. Research scientists use eBird data to track migration and other really cool research, but you can use eBird to keep track of your bird observations. It's easy and fun to use, but a powerful tool for research. Bring binoculars. Drinks and snacks will be provided.

Call Laura Jackson if you have questions: 652-9268.

### **Saturday, December 19: Blair County Christmas Bird Count – all day!**

BLAIR CO. CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT Dinner and Tally Rally at 6 P.M. at Marzoni's: 1830 East Pleasant Valley Blvd. Altoona, PA 16602.

Contact Compiler Laura Jackson if you are interested in participating. Counters will cover a specific portion of the count circle, which is centered in Culp, PA.

You do not have to be a counter to attend the dinner, but everyone must reserve dinner by Friday, December 11. Cost is \$20 for buffet. Gluten-free and Vegetarian options are available. Call Laura Jackson for details: 652-9268.

Make check payable to JVAS and send \$20 to Laura Jackson 8621 Black Valley Road Everett, PA 15537 by Dec. 11. Reservations are required! Complete the form on page 11 and send with your payment.

### **Saturday, December 26: Bedford County Christmas Bird Count – all day!**

We need your help! Counters will cover a specific portion of the count circle, which includes Shawnee State Park. You do not have to be a counter to attend the potluck dinner. The potluck dinner and tally rally will be held at 5:30 pm at the Buffalo Mills Methodist Church. Contact Laura Jackson if you can participate: 652-9268.



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

**December 19, 2015 at 6 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

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**Only \$20 per person (includes gratuity)**

**Note: Anyone with special diet restrictions can order separately - just call Marzoni's by December 7 to place your order, and call Laura to reserve your place.**

-----Reservation and Payment should be mailed by Friday, Dec. 11-----

Make Check Payable to **JVAS** and mail to Laura Jackson at 8621 Black Valley Road Everett, PA 15537  
or pay at the Nov. 17 JVAS meeting

\_\_\_\_\_ is reserving \_\_\_\_\_ dinner(s) at \$20 each for a total of \$\_\_\_\_\_  
(Name – please print)





**JUNIATA VALLEY AUDUBON**

PO BOX 42

TYRONE, PA 16686-0042

*Address Service Requested*

## **Golden-winged Warbler T-shirts (Fundraiser)**

Shirts are organic cotton and come in S, M, L, XL, and XXL. XXL is \$25, other sizes are \$20 if you buy one at a JVAS meeting. Order through PayPal at [www.JVAS.org](http://www.JVAS.org) or save \$5 and buy one at the next JVAS meeting.

ALL proceeds are used to help Golden-winged Warbler Conservation Projects.



Please support our  
fundraiser for Golden-winged Warblers.

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