

The Gnatcatcher

Newsletter of Juniata Valley Audubon

Vol. XLVII, No. 4 — September/October 2015

Published bimonthly (except for July and August)

as a benefit for members of the...

JUNIATA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY



President's Message

President's Message:

-Laura Jackson

You Are What Hope Looks Like To A Bird

I attended the Audubon National Convention 2015 held in Leesburg, VA in mid-July. It was a combination bird conservation workshop, inspirational gathering, wedding anniversary celebration, and food fest. Of course, in order to properly celebrate our anniversary, hubby Mike went, too. We not only enjoyed the convention, but left inspired to do more for bird conservation.

David Yarnold also attended, of course. He is Audubon's 10th president. He reminded the attendees, in the plenary session, that Audubon is one of America's premier conservation groups. I knew that Audubon was a big group, but I had not really thought much about its clout. Did you know that Audubon has an annual budget of \$86 million, and contains almost 500 chapters nationwide? There are over 2 million subscribers to the Audubon magazine. More importantly, David Yarnold believes that, "Audubon has the potential to be the most effective conservation network in America." He feels that Audubon already has the best network and the most bird conservation programs. His question to us was, "How does Audubon leverage that?" He also pointed out that, "Birds can't legislate."

National Audubon's leverage was clearly demonstrated when the Duncan amendment was introduced in early June. If passed by Congress, it would have destroyed the judicial power of the Bird Migratory Treaty Act (MBTA). Congressman Jeff Duncan (SC) didn't act on his own. Audubon staff found out that Duke Energy, after being fined for illegally killing eagles at its industrial wind projects in Wyoming, was funding a lobbying firm (to the tune of at least \$60,000) to amend the MBTA, and also discussed amending the MBTA with Duncan — after contributing to Duncan's political campaigns. The Duncan Amendment was a clear case of Corporate Payback!

After Audubon sent out an Action Alert to stop the Duncan amendment, 44,000 people signed a petition to Duke Energy and 35,000 people wrote comments on Duncan's FB page. Thank you if you were one of those people!! The Duncan amendment was removed in early July.

There are a lot of other reasons why Audubon is so effective at bird conservation. Mike and I attended different workshops during the three days of sessions, so we could learn more about conservation strategies, successes, and challenges. We will share these with you in other articles and in future Juniata Valley Audubon Society projects. We hope you will get involved, too. Why? **YOU are what hope looks like to a bird.**

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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TURTLE TIME

Marcia Bonta

Most evenings I take a short walk around Butterfly Loop, a trail my husband, Bruce, established years ago with the help of our tractor and bush hog through First Field. No longer a field, it is a meadow filled with wildflowers, and the only way to see it, other than wading through waist-high plants, is on this trail.

On the first of June, despite lowering clouds, I set out and stopped to watch an eastern towhee attacking a barn window.

Then, a little farther along the trail, I encountered an eastern box turtle I'd seen hanging around this area. She had dug a nest in the wet mud on the right side of the trail and already laid five eggs. I stood silently behind her and watched as she slowly moved one bent, miniature dinosaur-like leg and then the other. She then raised herself and squeezed out a sixth white egg, looking like she was blowing up a small balloon. She kept gently touching the egg with first one back foot and then the other, as if she was testing it to see if it had solidified.

It does take a while after the eggs are laid for them to "chalk," a term used to describe the hardening of the thin calcium layer on the outside of the egg. But even after it hardens, the eggs remain flexible. She also used her hind feet to make sure the other eggs were piled correctly.

After repeating the slow, alternate swaying of her hind legs, she once again elevated her shelled body and squeezed out another elongated white egg. Again she tested the eggs with her hind feet for several minutes before she grasped some dead grass from one side of her excavation and pulled it over the eggs with one hind foot. She only grasped a few pieces of grass each time and continued moving at reptilian speed.

I could see that it would take more time than I had for her to cover up her treasure, so I made a wide circle around her and moved quietly on my way. Later I learned she was something of a super mom. Eastern box turtles lay from one to eight eggs in a nest, but four or five is the usual number. They prefer to dig their nests, lay their eggs, and cover them up in the early evening, just as my female had, although some females take five hours to finish the task.

I didn't have much hope that the nest would succeed because over the years, I have often seen a female covering up a nest and patting it down with her plastron, only to find it dug up and the remnants of shells strewn near the destroyed nest by one of the turtle egg predators, principally raccoons and skunks. In fact, only a couple days later, a bit farther along Butterfly Loop, I found a predated nest, but the nest I had observed remained secure throughout

Continued Page 3



Mike Jackson photographed this box turtle laying eggs in their front yard on June 14, 2012. Sadly, all the eggs were dug up and eaten by a predator during the night. Skunks and raccoons will eat turtle eggs.

Turtle Time Continued...

the summer, no doubt due to Bruce's moving the trail over a couple feet the next time he bush-hogged so that wildflowers could quickly cover the site.

The temperature of the eggs, during incubation, determines the sex of the hatchlings. Lower temperatures (75-80 degrees Fahrenheit) produce more males and higher temperatures (84-93 degrees F.) more females. Those in the middle of the range have a 50-50 chance of being male or female.

The eggs hatch anywhere from 67 to 103 days, depending on the nest temperature. The hatchlings can take two or even three days to emerge from their shells, because it is essential that they fully absorb their yolks on which they live for several weeks or even months.

Even after hatching, they may not emerge from their nests for weeks or months, even sometimes overwintering in them. Or they may wait for rain to soften the soil and make it easier to dig their way out.

After their emergence, these tiny turtles mostly hide and feed on small prey they find under clumps of grass and leaves such as pill bugs, worms, slugs, and little crickets. They remain hidden for several years until they are three inches long.

Although I hoped to see them emerge from their nest, I knew that it was unlikely. Nevertheless, I felt incredibly privileged to have had the opportunity to watch an eastern box turtle lay her eggs.

Years ago I had observed the long, slow mating of a pair on Laurel Ridge beneath a mountain laurel shrub, and on two previous occasions had seen a female digging her nest. Once I even spent a couple hours following a particularly bold male as he moved through the forest. And I learned that whatever they do is done incredibly slowly. I call it turtle time. Maybe that's why they can live as long as 150 years.



Mike and Laura Jackson found this newly hatched box turtle on October 4, 2007. It was the last one out of the nest.

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 12 oz. bag of medium roast coffee is \$10 a bag. Shipping is extra, so call Laura Jackson by the 10th of each month to order your coffee for pick up at the JVAS monthly meetings, starting in September. Phone 814-652-9268.

Like Café Lenca at www.facebook.com/CafeLenca



JVAS Joins In Juniata Valley River Project: Life In The River

- by Kristin Joivell

Led by JVAS Secretary Kristin Joivell, on Saturday, May 9, Juniata Valley Audubon Society members came together with Juniata Valley Elementary students for a river project. Taking place in the Frankstown Branch of the Juniata River on the Juniata Valley School District campus, adults and students worked together to collect data about the river.

Teams gathered macroinvertebrates from the water in the river by flipping over rocks and using nets to capture these small organisms. Water penny beetle larva, caddis fly larva, and mayfly nymphs abounded as groups tallied up their results. Since many of the macroinvertebrates found are considered pollution intolerant, the tested area was determined to be an excellent quality stream.

Student sketches of the macroinvertebrates will ultimately be used by Kristin Joivell in creating a nature guide for the river at Juniata Valley Elementary School.



Matt Hardie-fourth grader, and Mario Grugan-fifth grader, showed Stan Kotala how to identify mayfly nymphs



All the Life In The River participants had a great time!



Kristin Joivell, is Life In The River Project Coordinator and JVAS Field Trip Chair



Aaliyah Foster-second grader, Alice Kotala, and Makenna Hartman-fourth grader look for macroinvertebrates

The JVAS Board Needs Your Help!!!

We would love to have volunteers to fill the following positions:

- Director-at-Large: We have two openings.

A JVAS Director should attend Board meetings to provide input on JVAS policies and activities. The position does not entail a lot of time or work; just a commitment to try to attend the 5 Board meetings each year.

The JVAS Board meets at 6:30 P.M. on the first Tuesday of February, April, August, October, and December.

All members are welcome to attend!

JVAS Fall 2015 Field Trips

Please note: We ask that you do not bring any pets on JVAS Field Trips

Sunday, August 23: Blue Knob State Park Nature Walk from 9:00 – 11:00 am

We will meet at the Buck Hill Amphitheater at 9:00 am for a leisurely nature hike, focusing on plants, butterflies, and birds. This is a good time of year to enjoy nature at its fullest, ripe with fragrant flowers and bright colors. Bring your binoculars, water, and wear comfortable shoes. The walk will last about 2 hours. Trip leaders are Mike and Laura Jackson: call 652-9268 if you have questions.

Directions to Blue Knob State Park: www.dcnr.state.pa.us/stateparks/findapark/blueknob/

Saturday, September 12: A Walk in the Wood AND "A Walk in the Woods" from 10:30 am - ?

Conceived of by Benton MacKaye in 1921 and maintained by trail clubs in partnerships with multiple agencies, the Appalachian Trail extends from Georgia to Maine through approximately 2200 miles of white blazes. In the spirit of America's Eastern Scenic Footpath, join AT section hiker, Kristin Joivell, for an AT themed adventure! First, we will go on a short walk through Hartley Wood in State College--perhaps we will encounter some "trail magic" along the way. Meet at the Arboretum parking lot at the corner of Park and Bigler in State College. After the walk, Kristin will lead you through a "shake down" of typical gear in an AT hiker's pack and you can sample a few conventional AT hiker power-up snacks too. Finally, we will travel to a nearby theatre in State College to view the newly released movie, "A Walk in the Woods," starring Robert Redford and Nick Nolte (based on Bill Bryson's 1998 bestselling book of the same title). Movie tickets cost \$7.50.

View the official trailer to the movie at www.youtube.com/watch?v=cOF2LIAp9bw

Snacks will be provided, but bring a picnic lunch. Contact trip leader, Kristin Joivell, at kristinjean@hotmail.com or call 386-6267 for more details.

Saturday, September 19: Bald Eagle State Park Birding from 8:30 – 11:00 am.

This is the first in a series of activities designed to help you know more about the Important Bird Areas (IBAs) located in our chapter's territory. We will explore some birdy parts of Bald Eagle Ridge IBA on this trip. Meet Mark Bonta, trip leader, at the I-99 park-and-ride lot in Tyrone to carpool to Bald Eagle State Park. Bring binoculars, drinks, and snacks. Call Mark Bonta if you have questions: 610-348-3282.

Sunday, September 27: Lower Trail Grannas Station Tree Walk from 2:00 – 4:00 pm

As trees begin their turn into autumn's masterpiece, Laura Jackson, President of the Juniata Valley Audubon Society chapter, will focus on their names, similarities, differences, and their relationship to other organisms, including man. Meet at Grannas Station Visitor Center at Gannister (near Williamsburg), September 27 at 2:00 pm. The walk will last about 2 hours.

Directions from U.S. 22 to Grannas Station: Turn east on PA Route 866, then turn right onto Lower Piney Creek Road immediately after crossing the metal truss bridge, then turn right into the trailhead. Call Laura Jackson if you have questions: 652-9268.

Saturday, October 17: Allegheny Front Hawk Watch from 9:00 am – ?

Meet Mike and Laura Jackson at the Shawnee Country Market along Rt. 30 in Schellsburg. We will carpool to the Hawk Watch, since parking is limited. Bring binoculars, folding chair, and lunch. It is usually windy and colder at the hawk watch, so dress warmly and in layers. Call Laura Jackson if you have questions: 652-9268.

Saturday, October 24: Staff Sergeant Francis Campion Memorial Hike from 2:00 – 5:00 pm.

This hike honors Staff Sgt. Franck Campion, a JVAS member who died in a military training accident in 2011. Meet at 2:00 pm at Penn State Altoona's Seminar Forest for a 3-mile stroll through the fall woods. Directions: Heading up Juniata Gap Road toward campus, look for the left turn onto Beckers Lane just before the main entrance to Penn State Altoona on the right.

Call Kristin Joivell, trip leader, if you need more details: 386-6267.

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 Steve Bonta or 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!

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.

**Regular Meetings/Programs (Free) - Bellwood-Antis Public Library
526 Main Street, Bellwood, PA 16617 Phone: 742-8234**

The Edwards Fig Parrot is found only in Papua New Guinea. What is its favorite fruit? Find out on Sept. 15.

September 15, 2015 – Tuesday 7:00 PM

***American Zoo Consortium: Collecting and Conservation in
Papua New Guinea***



Ron Johnson will describe his three expeditions to the second largest island in the world - home to over 700 species of birds including 33 Birds of Paradise. Ron will explain the importance of the expeditions, tribal culture diversity and urgency to preserve the world's third largest rainforest.

Ron was Curator of Birds at Jacksonville, Minnesota and Miami Zoos. He recently retired from the Univ. of Wisconsin as an Aquaculture Outreach Specialist. He now lives in PA and is a member of JVAS.

Added bonus: Papua New Guinea regional "treats" will be offered at the meeting.



Do you know which Honduran bird has the loudest bird call on earth? Find out on Oct. 20.

October 20, 2015 – Tuesday 7:00 PM

Honduras: Wildlife, Parks, and People

Mark Bonta, Ian McGregor, and John Dibert will describe their trips to some of Honduras's most important protected areas, our encounters with their flora and fauna, and the local people who, against all odds, dedicate their lives to conservation. In particular, they will look at several iconic but threatened bird species—Red-throated Caracara, Honduran Emerald, Three-wattled Bellbird, Golden-winged Warbler, Great Green Macaw, and others—that depend on healthy cloud forests, dry forests, rain forests, and pine forests protected by community-based conservation initiatives. They will conclude by explaining how Pennsylvanians can get involved.

Mark is Assistant Professor of Earth Sciences at Penn State Altoona, and has lived, worked and researched in Honduras off and on since 1991. Ian is a senior Environmental Studies major, and John is a sophomore Geosciences major, both at Penn State Altoona.

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.

Maxine Lichvarcik Memorial Picnic Memories

Remember all that rain we had in June? One of the very few days that it did not rain was on June 16 when we held our picnic. The Maxine Lichvarcik Memorial Picnic at Pine Hill Picnic Area in Rothrock State Forest was held on a beautiful June evening. After a delightful potluck dinner, we went on a nature walk. A timber rattlesnake was carefully observed hiding among the ferns, we found a wood turtle trucking down a forest path, and identified beautiful royal ferns, poke milkweed in bloom, and listened to a number of forest birds. The wood thrush's ethereal song was the perfect accompaniment to our walk. John and Arlene Lennox entertained us with their nature sketches until darkness ended our relaxing evening.



Dave Bonta pointed out the difference between cinnamon and interrupted ferns.



Avah fell in love with the wood turtle



Timber rattlesnakes are masters of camouflage. We were lucky to spot this one.



John and Arlene Lennox shared examples of their newest passion: sketch journaling

Save trees! Save funds!

Please help us save JVAS funds for conservation projects. Email Laura Jackson (MLJACKSON2@EMBARQMAIL.COM) to sign up for a digital copy of *The Gnatcatcher*. You'll get *The Gnatcatcher* sooner and the photos will be in color. We pledge to keep your e-mail address confidential and we won't share it with other organizations or companies.



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*.

True, this column is supposed to be poetry written by JVAS members, but we are sure that Emily Dickinson *would* have been a member of JVAS (albeit not an active member), if she were living in our area now. She equates birds to hope, just as Audubon equates hope to us ("You are what hope looks like to a bird.")

"Hope" is the thing with feathers
BY EMILY DICKINSON (1830-1886)

"Hope" is the thing with feathers -
That perches in the soul -
And sings the tune without the words -
And never stops - at all -

And sweetest - in the Gale - is heard -
And sore must be the storm -
That could abash the little Bird
That kept so many warm -

I've heard it in the chilliest land -
And on the strangest Sea -
Yet - never - in Extremity,
It asked a crumb - of me.

Source: *The Poems of Emily Dickinson Edited by R. W. Franklin* (Harvard University Press, 1999)

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU.

Please send your newsletter submissions to Laura Jackson (MLJACKSON2@EMBARQMAIL.COM) by the first of February, April, August, October, and December, in order to be printed in the subsequent issue of *The Gnatcatcher*. Please submit conservation news, field trip reports, book reviews, poetry, or a nature article that you think will interest our members.

Golden-winged Warbler T-shirts (Fundraiser)

Proceeds benefit Golden-winged Warbler Conservation Projects.

- Small, Medium, Large, X-Large is \$20
- XXL Shirts are \$25.00
- Shirts are good quality, organic cotton, in Black

Order through PayPal at www.JVAS.org

Shirts will be available for sale at each evening program and at some of the field trips. Please support our fundraiser for Golden-winged Warblers.



This logo will be on the front of the shirt.

This is on the back of the shirt, centered, in yellow:

“The purchase of this shirt helped one of the most threatened birds in North America.”

-Juniata Valley Audubon Society-
jvas.org

JUNIATA VALLEY AUDUBON

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