

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

It will be too late to share my Christmas Wish List with you, since Christmas will be over by the time you read this newsletter. So, I'm going to share my New Year's Wish List with you, knowing that someone out there just might be able to help me find the right kind of chair.

That's right, I need 4 chairs. I already have a table.

I don't mean the padded, soft, comfy kinds of chairs that I like to sit in while I read. No, this chair is associated with a position of leadership sprinkled with camaraderie. I'm describing the JVAS **Fieldtrip Chair**. We need someone who is willing to plan just 6 field trips for our club in the fall of 2017. Kristin Joivell is the outgoing chair - she has lined up the trips that will keep us engaged in the outdoors until next fall. Kudos to her for all the trips she has organized and led over the past 2 years! We need someone who will help us continue some of the popular field trips by either leading the trips or asking someone else to lead them. The field trip chair does not have to attend all the trips, but we do need someone to organize them.

Another chair that is needed is the JVAS **Conservation Chair**. Stan Kotala ably served as chair for many years - he and I are still on the committee, but we'd like someone to step up to lead this very important aspect of JVAS. That is what Audubon is all about - birds and conservation. Would you be willing to lead us in this important endeavor? Stan and I are here to help you.

Another chair on my wish list is for **Hospitality Chair**. Marcia Bonta is the current chair and she does a fantastic job. She finds volunteers to bring goodies for the evening meetings. She makes the reservation for our spring banquet - which is Tuesday April 18, 2017 - mark your calendar, and she organizes our potluck events. Marcia tells me it is time to pass these enjoyable tasks to someone else. Could that be you, please?

The last chair on my wish list is for **Membership Chair**. Charlie Hoyer loves to crunch data onto spreadsheets and that's the kind of person we need to replace him. A number cruncher - and it could be a potato chip cruncher, too. If you like spreadsheets, this chair is for you! Wanna take a bite at it?

I wish that's all I needed - just 4 chairs, but there's more. I also need a VP. Our current Vice-President is Mark Bonta. He has done a wonderful job for 3 years, but his research on birds and fire, and his other ethno-geography interests are calling him far a-field. Would you be willing to serve as **Vice-President** of JVAS, starting in May? You would help to schedule our evening programs and would cover for me, if I can't attend. You would even get to be President of JVAS!

If you are interested in any of the above, study the job descriptions on page 7 of the newsletter. Give me a call if you need more details, or if you are interested. **Don't do it for me, do it for the birds!**

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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- ♦ Warren Baker

JVAS 2017 Winter and Spring Programs

Our programs, designed for a general audience, are free and open to the public.

We meet in the Bellwood-Antis Library at 526 Main Street, Bellwood, Pa. from January to May.

Directions: Take Interstate I-99 to the Bellwood/Route 865 Exit (Exit 41). Follow Rt. 865 through the Sheetz/Martin's intersection. Proceed about 4 blocks and turn right at the "Business District" sign, just before the railroad overpass. Turn left at the dead end and travel to the stop sign. Continue straight for a short distance; the library will be on your right.

JVAS Programs start at 7 PM and end at 8:30 PM, but sometimes the lively discussions extend our meetings until later. We certainly understand if you must leave early!

Tuesday, January 17, 2017: Members' Night

Our annual Member's Night is always a good time, with lots of socializing and an impressive assortment of slideshows, videos, wildlife art, nature poetry, nature crafts, and other by-products of our on-going fascination with the natural world. We'll enjoy some delicious desserts while we watch the programs, so don't forget to bring some goodies to share.

Contact Program Chair Mark Bonta (mab86@psu.edu) by Tuesday, January 10, if you'd like to make a presentation, which should be no longer than 10 minutes.



Sign me up for
the Hospitality
Chair!

JVAS 2017 Winter and Spring Programs continued...

Tuesday, February 21, 2017: *Climbing Mt. Kilimanjaro and a Wildlife Photo Safari of Tanzania* presented by Randy Caber

Randy will share his adventures and photos while on safari in Africa. The goal of his adventure was not only to see the awesome animals of Africa, but to also climb Kilimanjaro, an impressive peak that is often seen in nature shows, but more rarely climbed. It took Randy 48 hours of climbing, with very little sleep, to reach the top of Kilimanjaro - a dormant volcano rising 19,341 feet above sea level in Tanzania. He started out with 5 other adventurers, but not all made it to the top. Enjoy Randy's recount of his adventure, while watching some spectacular photos of Africa. After recuperating from his trek up and down the mountain, Randy went on a 7-day safari in the Serengeti, Ngorongoro, and Lake Manyara National Parks.



Tuesday, March 21, 2017: *Galliformes of the World* presented by Ron Johnson

Game birds have played an interesting role in history. We have domesticated them, relish them as a food source, hunt them for sport, and transport them from one country to another. Some species are invasive in introduced countries, but threatened in their homeland. Ron Johnson is collaborating with two colleagues on writing a new monograph on pheasants. The JVAS program will first give an overview of the families in the order Galliformes - Megapodiidae (brush turkeys), Cracidae (guans, curassows), Numididae (guineafowl), Odontophoridae (new world quails), and pheasianidae (pheasants, partridges, turkeys and grouse). Many of the game birds around the world are Threatened or Endangered because of habitat loss, or exploitation. Ron will then explore the pheasant family: their importance, current status, and ongoing conservation projects. He will discuss species and subspecies as it relates to threatened or endangered rank and how this affects conservation strategies. Do we save only full species or are subspecies important to preserving genetic diversity? What role do ex situ projects play in preserving species?

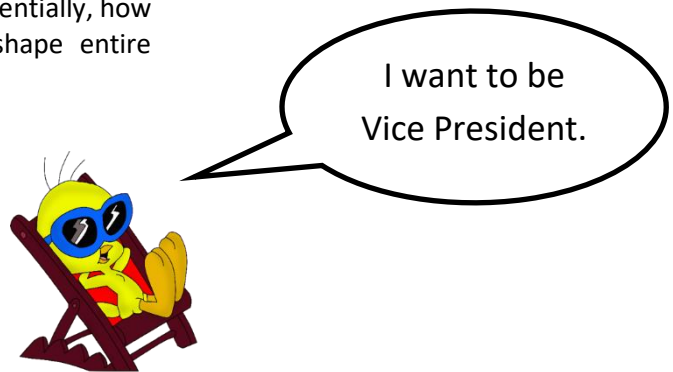
Tuesday, April 18, 2017 JVAS Spring Banquet Our Speaker is Dr. Mark Bonta ***"I am that bird": reflections on ethno-ornithology and the sciences***

Silent Auction 5:30 PM Dinner 6 PM at Hoss's Steak & Sea House
110 Patch Way Rd. Duncansville, PA 16635

This multimedia presentation explores the contributions that traditional societies are making toward human understanding of birds. Examples are drawn from the most provocative recent collaborations between native peoples and Western scientists, for example the ancient honeyguide-human shared speech in east Africa. Such examples provide a glimpse of the incredible depth of relationships between people and birds, the understanding of which is leading us into uncharted territory in ornithology and across the biological sciences. The speaker's research is

JVAS 2017 Winter and Spring Programs continued...

highlighted, including human-oilbird relationships in Venezuela and human-bellbird interactions in Honduras. The featured story is of the search to provide video documentation of fire propagation by the Brown Falcon (*Falco berigora*) in Arnhem Land, Northern Territory, Australia. This ongoing collaboration is being coordinated by the presenter and Bob Gosford, an Australian ethno-ornithologist, under the supervision of Aboriginal resource management ranger groups interested in garnering evidence of an extraordinary tool-using behavior. The intentional spreading of wildfire by certain raptors is widely recognized and accepted by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in the region, and in the former case is incorporated into ritual, but because definitive evidence necessary to satisfy Western scientific journal standards is still lacking, it is excluded as a factor in fire management practice. If we can garner the evidence, not only will 40,000+ years of accumulated ethno-ornithological knowledge be vindicated, but also we should reconsider the overall picture of how and why widespread tropical burning occurs—and, potentially, how humans first figured out how to use the firestick to reshape entire continents.



Tuesday, May 16, 2017: *Climate Change Science Expedition in Churchill, Manitoba* presented by **Kristin Joivell**

Tuesday, May 16, 2017 from 7pm to 8:30pm

With its short spring, summer, and fall seasons, the subarctic provides unique opportunities for research in climate change. In summer 2016, Kristin Joivell spent 3 weeks in Churchill, Manitoba assisting in collecting data from the ponds throughout the Hudson Bay Lowlands with Dr. LeeAnn Fishback, Scientific Coordinator of the Churchill Northern Studies Centre. Kristin will share photographs of the data collection process, in addition to reporting on inferences about climate change made by the scientists on the research project. Additionally, Kristin will have live organisms from vernal pools here in Pennsylvania (which are very similar to the organisms in the ponds in the subarctic) on hand for participants to observe. Come prepared to take a closer look at pond ecosystems in this interactive presentation!



churchillnorthernstudiescentre

To learn more about the Churchill Northern Studies

Centre go to: www.churchillscience.ca

Read the Earthwatch group blog about the expedition

www.climatechangeatthearcticsedge.wordpress.com

Tuesday, June 20, 2017: Maxine Leckvarcik Memorial Picnic 6 PM - 9 PM



Detwiler Memorial Field 400 Standing Stone Ave, Huntingdon, PA 16652

The summer solstice is approaching as the longest day of the year nears. Our annual summer picnic has many eats and treats for all tastes and appetites! Join us as we picnic together and celebrate another year of exploring and protecting nature in Central PA! After eating, we will have a short nature walk near the Juniata River to conclude the evening's event. JVAS will provide roasted chicken for everyone. We hope everyone else will bring a covered dish to the main pavilion in Detwiler Field near Huntingdon to start the evening's event. **Directions:** Take 26 North out of Huntingdon. Detwiler Memorial Field is on the right, less than a mile outside of town.

*Not on Facebook? Join the JVAS Listserv for timely updates:

To subscribe, send an e-mail message to JVAS-L-subscribe-request@lists.psu.edu with **SUBSCRIBE** in the subject line.



After you have been added to the JVAS-L mailing list, you can send a message to JVAS-@lists.psu.edu ...which will be routed to all of the people currently subscribed to the list.

You can unsubscribe from the list at any time by sending an email to JVAS-L-signoff-request@lists.psu.edu ...with **UNSUBSCRIBE** in the subject line.

A letter to Juniata Valley Audubon Society members from Greg Goldman, National Audubon's new Vice President and the Executive Director of Audubon Pennsylvania.

"I want to take the opportunity to introduce myself. In September, I became the new Executive Director of Audubon Pennsylvania, after five years as Vice President, Development for the Philadelphia Zoo. The past three months have been exciting, as I've learned more about Audubon's impact across the state. I've already had a chance to meet with leaders of several of our 21 chapters, and I look forward to meeting all of you in the near future. In the meantime, we're scheduling calls in January so I have a chance to connect with all of you personally and discuss Audubon PA's strategic planning process and how chapters can be engaged in that. I'm excited to be part of an organization with such a vibrant network of chapters, and look forward to working together for bird conservation."

The phone call to the Central Region will be on January 5, at 7 PM:

Please dial the number below and type in the passcode when prompted.

Phone number: 1 888 585 9008

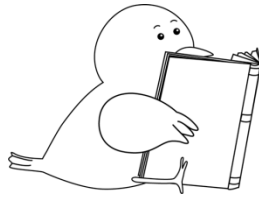
Conference room number (passcode): 933-919-058

I'm looking forward to the chance to work closely with all of you.

Regards,

Greg Goldman

email: ggoldman@audubon.org cell: 215-990-5998



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. Please note that contributions for the next newsletter should be sent to Laura by February 10, 2017. Good reading!

THE HIDDEN HALF OF NATURE: The Microbial Roots of Life and Health by David R. Montgomery and Ann Biklé

Review by Doug Mason

If you don't have the time to take Dr. Mary Ann Bruns' "Soil Ecology" class at Penn State, this is the book for you. Even as a soil scientist who spent my career in the branch called Edaphology, which examines the influence of soil on organisms, especially plants, this read was very informative.

An Indiana University study last year estimated that our planet is home to 1 trillion species of organisms, of which over 99.99% have yet to be discovered. Most are microbes. If you doubt that bacteria rule the world, consider that while there are about 7 billion people on our planet, there are a nonillion microbes (1 followed by 30 zeroes). Evidence of the "biodiversity effect" demonstrates that species diversity is essential to maintaining healthy, stable ecosystems that generate soil, produce oxygen, detoxify water and keep us healthy -- all vital "ecosystem services" that plants and animals rely upon.

Perhaps you've heard some of the startling statistics. A teaspoon of soil can contain billions of organisms. In fact, an acre furrow slice can contain a thousand pounds of bacteria, and an equal amount of fungi, protozoans and algae. These denizens directly and indirectly affect plant growth, soil fertility and soil development. The husband-wife team that coauthored this readable text add fascinating depth in these areas. I was particularly taken by their update on the classification of life into three domains, based on the latest developments in molecular biology and paleontology.

Not covered but worth considering are environmental implications. Thanks to pollution regulations in the USA and Canada that have curtailed emissions of sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxide, acid rain levels today have significantly lowered. This is good news for North American soil health, since acid rain depletes nutritious calcium, which prevents toxic aluminum from forming in the upper level of soil, which sustains plant and aquatic life. Aluminum caused environmental havoc during peak acid rain levels in the 1970s, relieved thanks to forward thinking binational agreements and federal legislation.

Earth's soils represent a potential storehouse for billions of tons of climate-altering greenhouse gases. The single most important take-away here is that we can manage our landscapes and soils to make a difference in climate change, as with Ms. Biklé's organic garden. Global warming has put one of nine planetary boundaries at risk, and as I'm sure I don't need to point out to most readers, 400 ppm of carbon dioxide may have already pushed us over the tipping point. (Another such boundary in the danger zone related to soil concerns Biogeochemical Flows, such as phosphorus and nitrogen cycles, among other elements that have been destabilized by our way of life).

Aside from illuminating readers about soil biodiversity and its relevance, Montgomery and Biklé go into considerable depth about our microbiome. There are at least 40 trillion bacteria on us and in us (not counting protozoans, viruses and other microbes making a living in association with humans). The large intestine alone contains 39 trillion bacterial cells. For point of comparison, there are about 10 trillion human cells in our bodies. In short, most of you is not you! The authors construct a wonderful story about these relationships and their importance to our health. Tellingly,

Off the shelf continued...

Biklé relates her winning battle with cancer (thanks to support from both inner microbes and her husband). On a personal aside, I underwent successful bariatric surgery in 2007 to lose weight and a prediabetic condition. Altering my stomach, and detaching my small intestine from my digestive tract, had physical effects that I understand more fully now as a result of reading "The Hidden Half of Nature." And as I hinted earlier, you don't have to be a soil scientist or microbial physiologist to appreciate this book.

JVAS Needs You!

Contact Laura Jackson (814-652-9268) if you are willing to help.

The JVAS Board meets 5 times a year - during the first week of February, April, August, October, and December.

Terms of office are for 2 years.

Which chair will I
take, Membership,
Conservation...?

Membership Chair: uses Excel to keep Chapter-only membership lists up to date. Helps to promote membership. National Audubon maintains the National membership list.

Conservation Chair: keeps current on local, state, and national government policies and actions affecting the environment. Works on at least one major conservation or environmental project.

Hospitality Chair: arranges for volunteers to bring refreshments to evening meetings, helps to organize the banquet and the picnic.

Fieldtrip Chair: plans and organizes at least six (6) field trips each year, and advertises the trips on Facebook.

Vice-President: assists the President, attends meetings, helps to arrange the evening meetings, and serves as President when the term expires for the current President.



Ice Mountain: An Elegy (*excerpt*)

11 February

the crest of Ice Mountain
once harbored a rare scrub barrens
ancient trees made wayward by the wind

as I start up the ridge my tired knees
make quiet popping noises
with every step

Sancho I say to myself
those windmills aren't giants
they're flowers for the dead

12 February

the squirrel's tracks end
in a smudge of blood on the snow
one tuft of fur

and the long furrow
its dangling tail drew
beside the fox's footprints

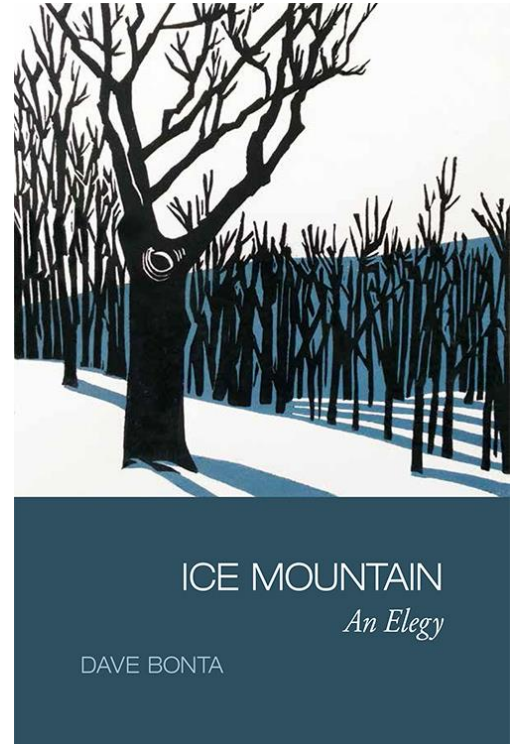
in the field a bulldozer
lowers its blade
to a white and heavy harvest

13 February

the spruce grove
at the top of the hollow
harbors a north-woods chill

seated on a runner sled
I hurtle down
into the sunlit field

my shadow like a witching rod
stretched out before me
alive to every swell and swale



You can pre-order at:

<http://www.phoeniciapublishing.com/ice-mountain-594225.html>

14 February

it snowed all night
I dreamt an opossum slept between us
with its death-head grin

by first light
the old dog statue in the yard
is buried up to its neck

let's get a bowl of fresh snow
not to eat but just to admire
like cut flowers

Ice Mountain: An Elegy by Dave Bonta is available for pre-ordering from Phoenicia Publishing at [phoeniciapublishing.com](http://www.phoeniciapublishing.com), and should be out by January 25. This poetic diary was written in 2014 and chronicles the slow end of winter on a mountaintop in central Pennsylvania, part of a landscape subtly but profoundly shaped by the last Ice Age. With climate change accelerating, how many more years will we get to appreciate a true Appalachian spring? The 132-page book includes illustrations from original linocuts by Elizabeth Adams, and is beautifully printed on cream paper with a heavy, matte-varnished cover. Ten percent of all proceeds will be donated to Save Our Allegheny Ridges (SOAR).

A Big Thanks to Jake Vaughn for scanning many of the old JVAS Newsletters and to Dave Bonta for posting them at www.JVAS.org.

Jake Vaughn scanned over a hundred historic JVAS newsletters, which are now available on www.JVAS.org for your reading pleasure. He plans to scan 71 more that were recently donated by Drs. Stan and Alice Kotala. **MANY THANKS!** We still need copies of "The Gnatcatcher" from the following years: **1969, 1970, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1974, 1975, 1976, 1977, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, and 1984.**

If you have any newsletters that you would be willing to donate or allow Mike to scan, please notify him at: mljackson2@embarqmail.com, call him at 814-652-9268, or bring the copies to a JVAS meeting. Any Gnatcatchers that you loan to Mike will be returned safely to you after the scanning is completed.

Maybe I will take
the Field Trip Chair

JVAS Field Trips

Our field trips, like our programs, tend to run from September through June. These are almost invariably on the weekends, and we try to have at least one a month. Unlike most Audubon chapters, we are not exclusively bird-focused. Many of our members are equally interested in things such as wildflowers, trees, reptiles and amphibians, wetland ecology, edible wild foods, mushrooms, geology, and more. Make a habit of attending JVAS field trips and you'll be sure to find out the surprises that nature has, to offer! Contact field trip chair, Kristin Joivell, with any questions you may have at (814)386-6267.



Hidden History at the Lower Trail A Saturday in January (weather dependent)

Come explore the local history near the Lower Trail in Mount Etna! On a Saturday in January (depending on the weather conditions), trip leader, Stan Kotala will take you to find evidence of the past industrial era. Mount Etna Furnace was one of the largest working iron furnace operations in Pennsylvania. This furnace structure was built in 1809. The entire Mount Etna Iron Furnace operations covered over 4,000 acres. There were over 100 employees and their families who lived and worked at Mount Etna Furnace until its closure in 1877. Meet at the Lower Trail at the Mount Etna trail head to begin the field trip. Keep an eye on the JVAS website at www.JVAS.org and our JVAS Facebook page to see more specific details.

JVAS Field Trips continued...

Winter Wonders at Prince Gallitzin State Park Saturday, February 18 from 12pm to 3pm

Seeds, pods, nests, cocoons, tracks...there's LOTS to see in winter, you just need to keep your eyes open! Visit Prince Gallitzin State Park to search for the things that are often overlooked during the other seasons of the year. The greenery and colors of spring, summer, and fall hide these winter wonders of the plant and animal world, but once your eyes adjust to the "brownery" of winter, you will be able to find many interesting things that are all around you. We will meet at the Park Office in Prince Gallitzin State Park to begin the field trip.



The soft brown shading of a cedar waxwing is high-lighted by the scarlet waxy tips on the wings of adults. Photo by Mike Jackson

Dunning Creek Wetlands Birding Hike Saturday, March 18 from 8:30am to 2pm

Meet at the Eat 2 Live Bistro on Rt. 56 (which is now closed) at 1634 Quaker Valley Rd, New Paris, PA 15554 at 8:30 am. We will carpool a short distance to the wetlands. The hike will last about 3 hours, with a stop in the bird blind. Wear waterproof boots, bring binoculars, listen to the forecast, and dress accordingly. Trip Leaders: Mike and Laura Jackson 814-652-9268. Optional Lunch at Slick's Ivy Stone in Osterburg. For more details: <http://slicksivystone.com>

Spring Awakening at Snetsinger Butterfly Garden Saturday, April 29. Starting time will be posted in a future newsletter.

It's time for the plants and insects to stir! Visit Snetsinger Butterfly Garden to see it in person. A guide from the Snetsinger Butterfly Garden will lead the group around the site with time to explore on your own afterwards. We will meet at the second set of parking lots on Herman Drive, near the restrooms. The garden is located within the Tom Tudek Memorial Park at 400 Herman Drive, State College, PA 16803.



The Eastern Tiger Swallowtail sips on nectar from creeping phlox in early spring. Photo by Laura Jackson

JVAS Field Trips continued...

Wildflower Ramble at Rocky Ridge Natural Area

Saturday, May 13 from 11am to 2pm

Late spring and early summer wildflowers at the Rocky Ridge Natural Area are a must see! Spectacular geologic formations provide the backdrop to wildflower blooms. Look forward to (hopefully) viewing pink and yellow lady slippers in profusion along with other distinctive wildflowers in this protected area. Unfortunately, plants don't bloom on a schedule, so come with an open mind and open eyes to make the most of what the season has to offer.

Rocky Ridge Directions: Travel on 26N out of Huntingdon. Travel past Cornpropsts Mills, if you get to Jackson Corner you've gone too far. Immediately opposite Wesley Chapel and Wesley Chapel Road, turn right onto Martin Gap Road. Take the left onto the bridge, then immediately turn right again. Watch for a Y in the road with a small wooden sign on the right labeled Frew Road. Take the right onto Frew Road. Park at the trailhead for the Standing Stone Trail and Rocky Ridge Natural Area. See the map from the Standing Stone Trail Club at the following:

http://media.wix.com/ugd/30a84d_63abee8a0b49403495afdedaf10e8281.pdf

JVAS Special Events

The 2nd Annual Earth Day Birding Classic

Saturday, April 22 noon - Sunday, April 23 noon

The 2nd annual Earth Day Birding Classic at Penn State Altoona will be held on April 22 and 23, 2016. Registration is free. The goal is for teams in six different categories to count as many species of birds as possible in the 24-hour-period beginning at noon on Saturday, April 22. This non-profit event is co-sponsored by the Environmental Studies program at Penn State Altoona and Juniata Valley Audubon Society. Pledges that team members garner will support bird conservation and education in central Pennsylvania. Teams of 3 or more (2 or more for Senior citizens) will count birds in Blair and surrounding counties, and prizes will be awarded during the closing ceremony. The opening and closing ceremonies will take place at the Slep Center on the Penn State Altoona campus immediately prior to and following the event. Registration deadline is April 15 – to register and for more information, contact Catherine Kilgus at catiegk5059@gmail.com. Details will also be available at www.JVAS.org



The flashy red flowers of our native coral honeysuckle (*Lonicera sempervirens*) attract hummingbirds and native bumblebees to their sweet nectar. This native vine is usually available at the native plant sale.

Photo by Laura Jackson

JUNIATA VALLEY AUDUBON

PO BOX 42

TYRONE, PA 16686-0042

Address Service Requested

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

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. The Garcia family partners with Sustainable Harvest Specialty Coffee Importers in Portland, Oregon so they can direct market their top quality coffee in the U.S. You can purchase green coffee or medium roast coffee. Contact Laura Jackson for details: 652-9268

Like Café Lenca at www.facebook.com/CafeLenca

Café Lenca Coffee will be sold at JVAS Meetings: 1 lb. bags are \$12 and 2 lb. bags are \$22. The roasted coffee is available as whole bean or ground.