

The Gnatcatcher

Newsletter of Juniata Valley Audubon

Vol. L, No. 1 — Jan/Feb 2018

Published bimonthly (except for July and August)

as a benefit for members of the...

JUNIATA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY



President's Message

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-Laura Jackson

2018: The Year of the Bird

According to the Chinese Zodiac, 2018 is the Year of the Dog, but in the U.S., many of us plan to celebrate 2018 as the **Year of the Bird**. Of course, for many Audubon members, every year is the year of the bird, and so is every day. Why call attention to birds in 2018? Aren't they important every year? Yes, but this year National Geographic and Audubon, and many other conservation organizations, have formed an alliance to call attention to the 100th Anniversary of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA). The MBTA was one of the first environmental laws ever to be passed - not only in America, but in the world.

The year of celebration will include many opportunities for conservation, too. The Migratory Bird Treaty Act is under attack by some politicians who want to weaken the enforcement of the act, since they often receive huge campaign donations from industry. In October, 2017, the Department of the Interior announced that it was considering far-reaching changes. One key provision that may be revised is how the MBTA imposes incidental take (unintended bird deaths) that result from legal industrial activity.

Amidst the celebration there is the somber realization that birds are in trouble worldwide due to climate change, habitat loss, pollution, and a myriad of other human-induced causes. Ornithologist Bridget Stutchbury, in ***Silence of the Songbirds***, laments the disappearance of millions of songbirds. She writes that we are losing so many plants and animals worldwide that basic ecosystem services - functions of the natural world that sustain us - are disrupted. Birds are an integral part of almost all ecosystems on earth and their plummeting numbers impact all of us in many ways that we might not yet realize. Her research shows that the total number of birds has dropped by 20 to 30%.

Sadly, many people don't care about birds. I hope each of us takes on the challenge to educate our friends, family, and neighbors about the importance of birds. Yes, many birds are beautiful and fun to watch, but we also depend on birds for their ecological services: pollination, insect control, reforestation, scavenging, and recycling of nutrients (to name a few).

I'd like to close with a quote from Terry Tempest Williams' book, ***When Women Were Birds: Fifty-Four Variations on Voice***, "Once upon a time, when women were birds, there was the simple understanding that to sing at dawn and to sing at dusk was to heal the world through joy. The birds still remember what we have forgotten, that the world is meant to be celebrated." Fortunately, we can join in the celebration of birds in 2018 as the Year of the Bird, and while we celebrate, we must continue to cherish those songs by conserving as much of the natural world as we can, starting in our homes, our backyards, and sharing bird song to all who will listen.



Chapter-only Memberships should be renewed by January, 2018. A renewal form was included in the last newsletter, or you can use the form in the enclosed flyer.

The Juniata Valley Audubon Society (JVAS) is a chapter of the National Audubon Society and is dedicated to the conservation and restoration of natural ecosystems, focusing on birds, other wildlife, and their habitats for the benefit of humanity and the Earth's biological diversity. Juniata Valley Audubon accomplishes its mission through advocacy, science, land stewardship, and education - working directly with Audubon Pennsylvania, the Pennsylvania state office of the National Audubon Society.

The JVAS is a tax-exempt, not-for-profit, educational organization as described in section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Gifts are deductible for income tax purposes (Tax ID # 25-1533496).

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NEW OFFICERS NEEDED

by Dave Bonta

As anyone who's been a member of JVAS for at least two years probably remembers, we hold elections on even-numbered years for our four officers: President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer. The President may only serve two consecutive terms, while the other three officers may succeed themselves indefinitely. Each officer becomes a voting member of the board (though they may already have a position on the board as committee chair, director-at-large, etc.). So, for new recruits, it's an opportunity to help shape the society's activities and priorities.

Laura Jackson, our current president, is concluding her second consecutive term and therefore must step aside. Mark Bonta, our vice president, is resigning for personal reasons. Both Sharon Clewell and George Mahon, our secretary and treasurer, have agreed to run again — though that doesn't mean their elections can't be contested. Nominations for all four positions are welcomed, and should be made at the February program meeting. If you can't attend the February meeting, but want to nominate yourself or another member, please email the nomination to Dave before February 18 at bontasaurus@yahoo.com

Of the four positions, treasurer and president are the most time-consuming. Secretarial duties involve taking minutes at the board meeting, while the main job of the vice-president is to line up seven programs for the year (including the banquet speaker). As for presidential duties, Laura has put together a helpful chart showing approximately how much time it takes her to do what she reckons to be the most essential tasks:

Duty	Timeframe	Hours
Preside over monthly meetings	3 rd Tuesday: Sept. - Nov.; Jan. - May: 6:30 pm - 9:30 pm	3 hrs/meeting
Prepare agenda and run Board meeting	1 st week of Aug., Oct., Dec., Feb., April	5 hrs/meeting
President's Message for Newsletter	Aug., Oct., Dec., Feb., April	3 hrs/newsletter
Picnic	3 rd Tuesday in May	3 hours
Annual Report	End of the year	2 - 3 hrs/ year
Committees - assist	Varies	Varies
Correspondence	Varies	2-3 hrs/week
Oversee Intern	September - early May	2-3 hrs/week
Conference Calls	Monthly	2 hours



The elections will be held at our March meeting, and the new officers will be installed at the April 17th Banquet.

Juniata Valley Audubon Society Field Trips Winter - Spring 2018

Check our Facebook page for updates. If you are not on Facebook, join the JVAS Listserv. Find Directions at www.JVAS.org.

Contact field trip chair Susan Braun if you have questions:

braun3112@gmail.com (814)574-0795

Saturday, February 17: Musser Gap 1pm - 3pm

Nature walk at Musser Gap. We will hike up the Musser Gap trail to visit this mountain gap environment. If time permits, we can visit the Musser Gap Greenway. Meet at the Musser Gap Parking lot near Pine Grove Mills, Centre County. Directions: at the intersection of Route 45 and Route 26 in Pine Grove Mills, travel 0.9 miles east on Route 45; the parking area is on the right <https://goo.gl/maps/V1Z6c7zt3532>

Trip Leader: Susan Braun braun3112@gmail.com (814)574-0795

Saturday, March 24: Birds of Huntingdon County 8am - 1pm

Birding trip in Huntingdon County for waterfowl and early migrants. This will be a driving birding trip. We will make several stops along the Juniata River and Lake Raystown as well as Old Crow Wetland. Bring something to eat and drink. Meet at Detwiler Memorial Field to carpool: 400 Standing Stone

Rd. Huntingdon, PA. <https://goo.gl/maps/ybUK5GZtetT2>

Trip Leader: Susan Braun braun3112@gmail.com (814)574-0795



Saturday, March 31: Bedford Co. Whitetail Wetlands Bird Walk 8:30am - 12 noon

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. Wear waterproof boots, bring binoculars, listen to the forecast, and dress accordingly. Optional Lunch at Slick's Ivy Stone (8785 William Penn Rd., Osterburg). Call to confirm this trip, as we often must cancel due to icy conditions.

Trip Leaders: Mike and Laura Jackson 814-652-9268.

Sunday, April 8: An Evening at Scotia 4pm - 9pm



Birding trip to Scotia — State Game Lands 176. This trip will introduce JVAS members to some of the great places to bird in Scotia Game Lands. We'll take a break to have a picnic supper (bring your own) and then finish the evening looking and listening for woodcock.

With some luck we might even hear an owl.

Meet at Circleville Park, 3225 Circleville Road, Port Matilda, Centre County.

<https://goo.gl/maps/AjhfiRgNQ7q>

Trip Leader: Susan Braun braun3112@gmail.com (814)574-0795

Saturday, April 14: Shavers Creek Cabin Walk 1pm - 5pm

Jennifer Baldwin will lead a field trip on the trails near her cabin in northern Huntingdon County. We'll walk part of the Ironstone trail and finish at Jennifer's cabin for a potluck meal. Bring some goodies to share.

Meet at the parking area at intersection of Route 26 and Charter Oak Road. <https://goo.gl/maps/qi78stcsvLH2>

Trip Leader: Jennifer Baldwin

Contact: Susan Braun braun3112@gmail.com (814)574-0795

Sunday, April 15: Lower Trail Wildflower & Bird Walk 10am to 2pm

Joint trip with PA Native Plant Society (PNPS).

A walk on the flat Lower Trail along the Frankstown Branch of the Juniata River. It should be easy to see migrating warblers and other birds, and the slopes will be covered with red trillium and other spring ephemeral wildflowers. Bring lunch and water. Meet at Water Street Flea Market, Rt 22 & Rt 453, Alexandria, Huntingdon County.

<https://goo.gl/maps/h2ZcWa7LeDB2> Trip Leader: Debra Grim dsgrim02@gmail.com (814) 644-5285



Saturday, April 21: Woodward Cave Wildflower Walk 10am to 12pm

Joint trip with PA Native Plant Society (PNPS).

The slopes above the cave entrance are adorned with a riot of spring ephemeral wildflowers, like the bloodroot pictured here.

Meet at Woodward Cave, 148 Woodward Cave Dr, Woodward, PA 16882, Centre County. <https://goo.gl/maps/tHbHz6uoN5s>

Trip Leader: Debra Grim dsgrim02@gmail.com (814) 644-5285



Bloodroot may be the most ephemeral of spring wildflowers.

Saturday, May 12: Canoe Creek Wildflower Walk 9am to 2pm



Joint trip with PA Native Plant Society (PNPS).

We will walk the Limestone and Moore's Hill trails to admire wild phlox, trout lilies, yellow lady's-slippers, and return along the Limestone trail without climbing the hill. Bring lunch and water. Meet at Canoe Creek State Park, Blair County. Enter from Turkey Valley Road, passing the park office, and park in the large parking lot near the lake. <https://goo.gl/maps/Y35pAJRTHhK2> Trip Leader: Debra Grim dsgrim02@gmail.com (814) 644-5285

Sunday, May 13: Rocky Ridge Natural Area Mother's Day Wildflower Walk 9am to 2pm

Joint trip with PA Native Plant Society (PNPS).

This is one of our most beloved wildflower areas. Bring lunch and water, be prepared for a hill climb and rocky trail. Meet at the intersection of PA 26 and Charter Oak Road, Huntingdon County:

<https://goo.gl/maps/qi78stcsvLH2>

Trip Leader: Debra Grim dsgrim02@gmail.com (814) 644-5285

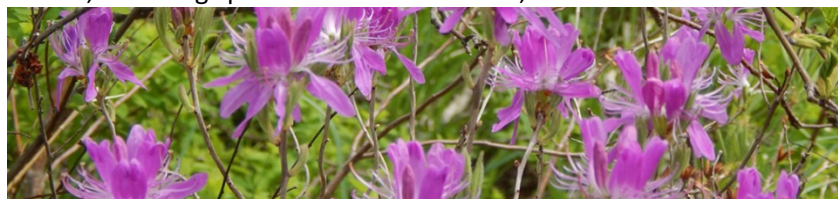
Saturday/Sunday, May 19 and 20: Moosic Mountain in Lackawanna County: Birds and more.....

This is an overnight trip to explore The Nature Conservancy's Dick and Nancy Eales Nature Preserve, as well as State Game Lands 300, located near Dunmore, Pa (just east of Scranton, Pa). Make your reservation at the Quality Inn, 1226 Harry P. O'Neill Highway, Dunmore, PA 18512. Rates are around \$70 - \$85. Call 570-348-6101 to book with the hotel - but it may be cheaper to book through an online service. David Trently, who lives in the area and is a professional international birding guide, will guide us at the TNC's preserve. Driving time from Altoona to Dunmore is about 3 ½ hours. Contact Trip Leaders Mike and Laura Jackson (jacksonlaura73@gmail.com or call 814-652-9268) no later than May 4, if you plan to attend. We will leave Altoona at 8 am on May 19 and will return the evening of May 20.



Moosic Mountain runs the length of SGL #300, located in Lackawanna and Wayne Counties. SGL #300 provides protection for a globally rare ridgetop ecosystem that known in only a few places in Pennsylvania. This rare habitat is called the Moosic Mountain Barrens. Moosic Mountain is also an important habitat for raptors, songbirds, waterfowl, game birds, bats, butterflies, and rare moths.

We will welcome the spring bird migration and explore a unique forest with bogs, and spring wildflowers at the Eales Preserve. This photo shows the top half of Bruised Ego Trail in the Preserve. We also hope to see the Rhodora when it blooms, a striking species of Rhododendron, shown below.



Juniata Valley Audubon Society Events Winter - Spring 2018

Check our Facebook page for updates. If you are not on Facebook, join the JVAS Listserv. Directions to join the Listserv are found at www.JVAS.org.

3rd Tuesday Evening Programs

Our evening programs are designed for a general audience, and all programs are free and open to the public. **A free dinner is included and starts at 6:30 PM, and the meeting starts at 7 PM.**

We meet in the Bellwood-Antis Library at 526 Main Street, Bellwood, PA.

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.



Tuesday, January 16, 2018 Evening Program: Annual Members' Night

Our annual Members' 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 Dr. Mark Bonta (mab86@psu.edu) by January 12, if you'd like to make a presentation, which should be no longer than 10 minutes. This program is open to the public, so invite your friends to enjoy your presentation.

Tuesday, February 20, 2018 Evening Program: Centre Wildlife Care Robyn Graboski presents, "Take A Walk on the Wild Side"

We will get to see 4 live animals up close as Robyn tells us about the **peregrine falcon, big brown bat, screech owl, and skunk**. She will explain the work that she does to rehabilitate wildlife. Since opening in 1995, Robyn and her volunteers have rehabilitated thousands of injured, sick and orphaned wild animals until they can be released back into the wild. They care for all native species of wildlife including mammals (bunnies to bears), birds (finches to bald eagles), reptiles and amphibians."



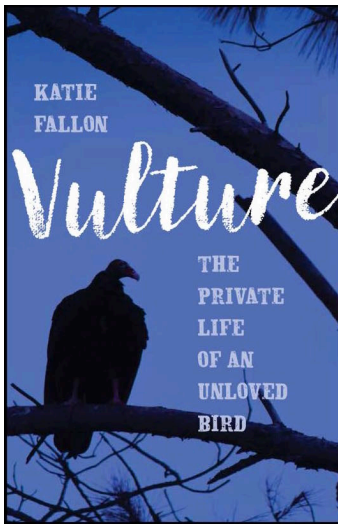
Robyn and the Peregrine Falcon

Tuesday, March 20, 2018 Evening Program: Two projects supported by JVAS Funding "Wetland Conservation at the Northern Blair County Rec Center" by Angela Spagnoli and "What Can We Learn from Monitoring PA State Park Nest Boxes?" by Dr. Laura Palmer

Angie Spagnoli will discuss her wetland restoration project, that JVAS supported with Earth Day Birding Classic funds. She will talk about the progress of the project, who has assisted, and how she has been spending JVAS's grant. She will also discuss her plans for the Northern Blair County Rec Center's wetland.



Dr. Palmer will discuss her involvement with the Cavity-Nesting Trail Program run by the Pennsylvania State Parks. In addition to being a volunteer trail monitor, Dr. Palmer has begun to analyze approximately a decade's worth of data collected by state park volunteers. She will also talk about a recent pilot study aimed at measuring nest box temperatures during the Eastern Bluebird breeding season. This project was also supported by funding from the 1st Annual JVAS Earth Day Birding Classic.



Tuesday, April 17, 2018 Annual Spring Banquet: Banquet speaker is Katie Fallon
Silent Auction 5:30 PM Dinner 6 PM at Hoss's Steak & Sea House
110 Patch Way Rd. Duncansville, PA 16635. Contact Hospitality Chair Catie Farr
no later than 4/10/17 to reserve. Call her at 570-651-3839 or email
[**catiegk5059@gmail**](mailto:catiegk5059@gmail.com)

Katie Fallon, author of *Cerulean Blues* (2011) and ***Vulture: The Private Life of an Unloved Bird***, will discuss the life and times of the noble Turkey Vulture, including its feeding, nesting, and roosting habits, migratory behaviors, and common misconceptions. Vultures are often overlooked, underappreciated, and unloved, despite the vital role they play in healthy ecosystems. Worldwide, vultures are more likely to be threatened or endangered than any other group of raptor.



Tuesday, May 15, 2018 Evening Program: Cassowaries and Rainforest Conservation in Papua New Guinea by Andrew Mack

Andrew Mack lived and studied in Papua New Guinea (PNG) most of 1987-2007. PNG is home to the third largest rainforest in the world and home to the third largest species of bird—cassowaries. These secretive birds are specialist frugivores (fruit-eaters) living in the dark understory of the rainforest where they disperse the seeds of many tree species too large for other animals to eat. Thus, they are important ecological keystone species. Many of the trees in the forest started out germinating from the droppings of cassowaries, and these were the subject of Mack's research: bird droppings. But the birds are also important in the diets and cultures of the hundreds of distinct cultures found only in this small country. His ecological research morphed into conservation work with landowners working to sustain their traditions and food security while moving to a better quality of life. See a review of Andrew's book, *Searching for Pekpek*, in a later issue of *The Gnatcatcher*.

MARK YOUR
CALENDAR!



Saturday, May 5, 2018 Central Pennsylvania Native Plant Festival

Boal Mansion, 163A Boal Estate Drive, Boalsburg PA 16827

JVAS plans to have a display at this event - contact Laura Jackson if you'd like to help.



Tuesday, June 19, 2018: Maxine Leckvarcik Memorial Picnic 6 PM - 9 PM

Canoe Creek State Park Pavilion #2 just off parking lot #6

Click here for a map: [**http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/cs/groups/public/documents/document/dcnr_004826.pdf**](http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/cs/groups/public/documents/document/dcnr_004826.pdf)

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 nature walk from 7 to 8:15 PM. JVAS will provide roasted chicken for everyone. We hope everyone else will bring a covered dish to share. **Be sure to let Hospitality Chair Catie Farr know what you plan to bring. Call her at 570-651-3839 or email** [**catiegk5059@gmail**](mailto:catiegk5059@gmail.com) We will end the evening with an optional visit to the bat church around 8:30 PM to see Pennsylvania's only flying mammals - bats! These bats beat the odds of White-Nose Syndrome and their survival needs to be celebrated. We will stay until around 9:15 PM to see the bats.

SPECIAL BIRDING EVENTS in 2018...Celebrating the Year of the Bird

Sunday, April 15 - Sunday, April 22 Earth Week Birding Classic



The 3rd annual Earth Week Birding Classic at Penn State Altoona will start at 12 noon on Sunday, April 15 and end at 12 noon on Sunday, April 22, 2018. Teams will choose one 24-hour "day" to complete their count and must register their count time 24 hours in advance. Registration is free.

The goal is for teams in seven different categories to count as many species of birds as possible in the 24-hour-period during the week prior to Earth Day, April 22. This non-profit event is co-sponsored by the Environmental Studies program at Penn State Altoona and Juniata Valley Audubon Society (JVAS). **Pledges that team members garner will support bird conservation and education.** Teams of 3 or more (2 or more for Senior

citizens and Big Sitters) will count birds in Blair and surrounding counties (Bedford, Huntingdon, Centre, Clearfield, Cambria), and prizes will be awarded during the closing ceremony at the Penn State Altoona campus immediately following the event. To register and for more information, please contact Catherine Farr at catiegk5059@gmail.com. More details will be posted at www.JVAS.org

Free Family Birding Workshops 2 - 4 pm, with optional bird walk from 4 - 5 pm

Join Juniata Valley Audubon Society for a family birding workshop. We'll introduce children and parents to the exciting world of birds with interactive activities, including an optional bird walk from 4 - 5 pm. Bring binoculars if you have them, but we will also have some child-friendly ones available. There will be free refreshments and free door prizes: bluebird boxes, bird feeders, and/or native plants for your backyard.

Open to children with their parent(s) Advance Reservations Required

Contact Laura Jackson at 814-652-9268 or email jacksonlaura73@gmail.com to register.

Sunday, March 11 at Canoe Creek State Park - register by March 1

Terry Wentz Education Center
205 Canoe Creek Road
Hollidaysburg, PA 16648

Sunday, April 15 at Northern Blair County Rec Center - register by April 7

Northern Blair County Rec Center
4080 E. Pleasant Valley Blvd.
Altoona, PA 16601

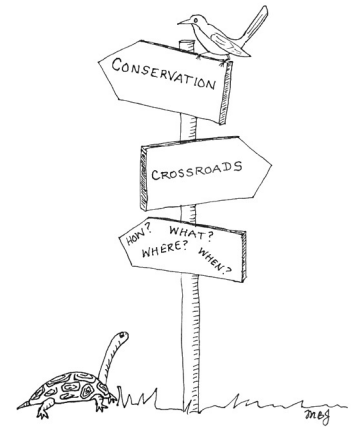
Sunday, May 6 at Fort Roberdeau - register by May 1

Fort Roberdeau Historic Site at White Oak Hall
383 Fort Roberdeau Road
Altoona, PA 16601



Marcia Bonta, JVAS Director-at-Large, is celebrating little Joe's arrival as the youngest member of the JVAS family. Catie and Ethan Farr, Joe's parents, and Joe, represent our best hope for the future of JVAS and for birds everywhere. Catie and Ethan have been providing dinner (at their own expense) for the JVAS Evening Meetings, so the Board decided we should set up a donation jar on the Dinner Table to collect money for Joe's college education. We hope you will contribute!

CONSERVATION CROSSROADS is a section of *The Gnatcatcher* that features environmental issues across a spectrum of local, national, and global concerns. Contact JVAS President Laura Jackson, if you know of an issue that deserves our attention and subsequent action. More information on these concerns is found at www.JVAS.org. Click on the Conservation tab.



Updates:

1. Sunoco's Mariner East 2 Pipeline across Pennsylvania
2. Proposed Hawn's Bridge Peninsula Development in Lake Raystown
3. Industrial Wind Projects
4. Pumped Hydro Storage Projects

1. Sunoco's Mariner East Pipeline across Pennsylvania

Citizen groups in eastern Pa. are ratcheting up the pressure to stop Sunoco's Mariner East 2 Pipeline, currently under construction, until a new safety assessment can be conducted. Community members and two elected officials met with Gov. Wolf, asking that he use his executive authority under Title 35 to immediately halt construction of the pipeline that will carry highly volatile liquids for 350 miles from Marcellus Shale deposits in West Virginia, Ohio and Pennsylvania to an export terminal in the former Sunoco Refinery in Marcus Hook, Delaware County. The residents say the pipeline will pose a grave risk to public safety because it will carry highly explosive natural gas liquids a few yards from houses and schools. Sunoco used eminent domain to obtain easements for the pipeline.

2. Proposed Hawn's Bridge Peninsula Development in Lake Raystown, Huntingdon County

JVAS supports the new group, "The Coalition to Protect Hawn's Peninsula," led by George Conrad & Micah Grubb. We urge JVAS members to attend the next meeting, which will be held on **Saturday, January 13th at 2:00 pm** at the Huntingdon Library (330 Penn St, Huntingdon, PA 16652) to organize objections to the proposed project on the peninsula. The US Army Corps of Engineers will be holding fact-finding meetings this coming spring. Check out the Coalition's FB page <https://www.facebook.com/groups/295642750929912/>

3. Please sign the Petition to support the Pennsylvania Game Commission's decision to keep wind turbines out of State Game Lands #300. Click on this petition link: <https://is.gd/5Iaoan>

After the PGC denied repeated requests by NextEra to build an industrial wind turbine project on SGL #300, an online petition was launched by Wind Future Pennsylvania in support of the wind project. Our petition was then launched to show that many people do, indeed, support the PGC's decision to protect SGL #300 from industrial development. Documents obtained by JVAS show that the PGC detailed over a dozen reasons by an industrial wind project would negatively impact SGL #300, which contains a globally rare habitat called Moosic Mountain Barrens. If you'd like to visit this rare habitat, sign up for the May 19/20 field trip.

Don't forget to show your support to the PGC by signing the petition: <https://is.gd/5Iaoan>

4. Pumped Hydro Storage Projects:

A. What are these? See the article in the Sept./October issue of *The Gnatcatcher* for background information.

B. The Joint Legislative Air and Water Pollution Control and Conservation Committee

will hold an Environmental Issues Forum on Monday, January 22 at Noon in Harrisburg (the November Forum was cancelled). Adam Rouselle will discuss his company's plans to build 20 pumped hydro storage projects in Pennsylvania. Two projects are proposed for Blair County, one in Bedford Co. and four in Somerset County. Laura Jackson plans to attend the Forum and hopes to speak during the public comment session. Please contact Laura at jacksonlaura73@gmail.com if you would like to attend.

Phenology? What Is It and Why Should I Care About It?

by Kristin Joivell

Let's talk about...phenology! First, what is phenology? Phenology is the study of key seasonal changes in plants and animals from year to year—such as flowering, emergence of insects and migration of birds—especially their timing and relationship with weather and climate.

So, why should you care? Scientists have been keeping track of seasonal changes for hundreds of years, and this longitudinal data can be evaluated for patterns. By investigating these patterns, scientists can try to figure out how the changing climate is going to affect plants and animals. Looking at the way that plants and animals respond to seasonal changes can give scientists ideas about the negative and positive impacts of climate change.

Unfortunately, there just aren't enough scientists to collect the data all over the world all the time. You can collect phenological data, too, it's easy! Add your observations to a citizen science website such as Project Bud Burst or eBird or the Pennsylvania Amphibian and Reptile Survey. These databases are the electronic notebooks of today's world and the data contained in them is very valuable to scientists as they try to make sense of what's happening in our world. So, the next time someone asks you about what you are doing out walking in the woods, tell them you are collecting phenological data; then explain why they should care about phenology!

Here's an example of phenological data collected by Marcia Bonta on Brush Mountain, near Tyrone; Terry Carnila in Dutch Corner, north of Bedford; and Mike & Laura Jackson on the lower slopes of Tussey Mountain, south of Everett. These dates are a record of the first fall sighting of Dark-eyed Juncos. These citizen scientists have shared this data with the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, which helps scientists study the impact of climate change. Do you see any trends in this data? *No data available if blank

Year	Bonta	Carnila	Jackson
1972	10/16	*	*
1973	10/29		
1974			
1975	10/23		
1976	10/26		
1977	10/20		
1978	10/16		
1979	10/26		
1980	10/21		
1981	10/14		
1982	10/2	10/17	
1983	10/4	10/17	
1984	10/22	10/23	
1985	10/9	10/17	
1986	10/14	10/11	
1987	10/29	10/23	
1988	10/19	10/22	
1989	9/5	10/21	
1990	10/14	10/25	10/23
1991	10/3	10/18	10/19
1992	9/27	10/21	10/18
1993	10/11	10/26	
1994	10/16	11/11	
1995	9/29	10/23	10/6
1996	10/15	10/31	

Year	Bonta	Carnila	Jackson
1997	10/9	10/26	10/18
1998	10/11	10/16	10/11
1999	10/4		10/5
2000	10/4	10/24	10/22
2001	10/16	10/25	10/16
2002	10/14	10/22	10/15
2003	10/7	11/2	
2004	9/24	10/17	10/6
2005	10/28	11/11	10/18
2006	10/3	11/3	10/19
2007	9/30	10/29	10/26
2008	10/26	11/22	10/16
2009	10/25	11/15	10/22
2010	10/3	11/12	10/17
2011	10/22	11/2	10/5
2012	10/14	11/6	11/24
2013	10/22	10/29	10/24
2014	10/21	11/1	10/12
2015	10/17	11/9	10/11
2016	10/14	11/11	10/10
2017	10/17	11/8	10/15



North American
Bird Phenology Program

The Gambia

We enjoyed Susan Braun's program in November, which introduced us to the birds and people of a tiny African country called The Gambia. In addition to the fascinating program, Susan made a delicious native dish called Domoda. Here is the American version of the recipe:

Chicken Domoda Gambian Peanut Stew* makes 20 – 24 cups

2 – 3 onions diced in large pieces
2 – 3 red peppers, diced in large pieces
2 tbsp. olive oil
4 cloves of garlic, minced
4 - 6 oz. tomato paste
12 – 16 oz. natural peanut butter
4 - 6 cups of chicken stock (or use chicken bouillon)
2 lb. boneless chicken thighs or breasts (*or use 3 lb. bone-in, cook in sauce and then remove meat from bones and add back to stew*)
4 large sweet potatoes (or 6 small), cut in 1" chunks
14 oz. can diced tomatoes, drained
1 hot pepper or red pepper flakes
salt and pepper

*can add other veg such as carrot, eggplant, squash, cabbage, okra

*can also use beef instead of chicken

1. sauté onions in oil until transparent
2. add red peppers and sauté until soft
3. add garlic and sauté 1 min
4. add chicken and sauté until no longer pink
5. in a separate bowl, mix tomato paste, peanut butter and stock until smooth; add to chicken/onion
6. cook 15 min
7. pierce hot pepper and place in pot, remove when Domoda reaches desired heat (or red pepper flakes)
8. add sweet potato and tomatoes
9. salt and pepper to taste
10. cook for another 45 min or more until vegetables are soft



Susan Braun with her display of beautiful Batiks and other souvenirs from The Gambia



A Blast from the Past: 1969 Christmas Bird Count

by Mike Jackson, Historian

Thanks to the generosity of John Orr, first President of JVAS when it was established in 1969, the club has a number of copies of *The Gnatcatcher* going back to January 1970 (Vol. 2 No. 1). Along with many other issues, we are particularly in search of **Volume 1, No. 1**, which we would like to scan. If you own this issue, dust it off and kindly lend it to us for scanning. Then it will be quickly returned to your collection for safe keeping.

I thought it would be interesting to relive some exciting times from past issues, so I've chosen an article about the first annual Christmas bird **census**, author unknown. It took place on **Sunday December 28, 1969**. I took the liberty of using bold type to highlight some of the interesting details.

"Our first annual Christmas bird census was in all ways a real success. At least a dozen observers got out into Sinking Valley for the count and there were about twenty or so adults plus children at the follow-up covered dish dinner. Dallas Webb, John McCall, Jack Hancock and John Orr were out at day break - that is, 7:00 A.M. - struggling in vain **in deep snow** around the Kettle Reservoir. Some deer were seen there but no grouse or turkey. A bitter wind, in effect, blew us back to our cars and on up into the valley. Dallas sighted the first birds - crows they were - at Raven Rocks, his home. Ravens are not seen in our area any more although there are still rocks for them at Dallas' if ever they should return. Getting back on our feet after the wind lashing, we immediately ran into a flock of **redpolls** - a species of finch - we counted 27 of these birds by the end of the day. The redpoll is very unusual in this area coming down from Canada at times in winter. This could well be the most unusual bird seen the entire day. It is a good one.

The wind died down considerably and stayed down, thus increasing the chances for seeing birds. Our prime target - **the bird of emphasis** in our count day planning - **the horned lark**, was everywhere in the wider part of the lower valley. We saw them feeding in manure strips and **by end of day had counted 285**, top in number of all species seen. We are eager to compare counts from other areas with ours in order to learn more about this fascinating ground bird.

Our total number of species for the day was 32. Total individuals seen: 1,400. An additional 9 species of birds were seen **in the two week count period** and were listed separately on the report sheets sent to National Audubon. The following is a listing of all birds seen December 28: hairy woodpecker, downy woodpecker, pileated woodpecker, red-bellied woodpecker, flicker, crow, tufted titmouse, black-capped chickadee, blue jay, starling, robin, house sparrow, junco, redpoll, pine siskin, goldfinch, tree sparrow, cardinal, white breasted nuthatch, horned lark, **meadow lark**, **evening grosbeak**, cowbird, mourning dove, mockingbird, ring-necked pheasant, **killdeer**, song sparrow, sparrow hawk, red-tailed hawk, wild turkey, white throated sparrow. The other species recorded are: Carolina wren, yellow-bellied sapsucker, cedar waxwing, brown creeper, golden crowned kinglet, house wren, black duck, ruffed grouse and snow bunting. The last bird is especially noteworthy as it is not seen too often or in great numbers in Blair County. Two buntings were seen among a flock of horned larks on a manure strip."

It's nice to see that during the first Christmas Bird Count, 48 years ago, a small group of hardy souls were willing to brave the elements in search of those elusive winter birds, particularly in conditions of wading through deep snow. Was a total count of 32 species, special? You bet. That's historic!

Can you identify these winter visitors?



L to R: Snow Bunting, Horned Lark, Common Redpoll

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