

The Gnatcatcher

Newsletter of Juniata Valley Audubon

Vol. L, No. 3 — May/June 2018

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as a benefit for members of the...

JUNIATA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY



President's Message

Out-Going President's Message:

-Laura Jackson

Many, many thanks for all the help...

This is my last message as President of JVAS. It's been a fast 4 years of planning, meetings, trips, special events, and more meetings. I'm happy to continue as Vice-President and will help our new President, Catie Farr, as much as possible. Congratulations to Catie for stepping up to lead our chapter.

Before I turn over this page to Catie in the next issue, I want to acknowledge the help I've had from the rest of the officers and the board. I know we will all miss Mark Bonta, who served as JVAS Vice-President. He is moving to Mexico so he is unable to take on the JVAS Presidency. He was instrumental in starting a number of JVAS conservation projects, which you can read about on page 4 of this newsletter.

Fortunately, our stalwart Treasurer, George Mahon, agreed to continue minding the financial accounts and Sharon Clewell is still Secretary. Catie and Ethan's delicious meals certainly add a wonderful dimension to the meetings. Of course, their little boy, Joe, steals the show if he comes along.

It is encouraging to know that all of our committees are chaired and functioning, and that JVAS is still going strong in its 49th year. Next year will be special: our 50th Anniversary! We could always use more help, though. If any of you want to get more involved, please consider joining a committee. Would you like to help us promote native plants as part of the Conservation Committee, headed by Ethan Farr? Are you interested in getting more active on the Education Committee, chaired by Jake Vaughn? I'm sure Catie and Ethan would love to have some help with the meals for the Monthly Evening Programs. In other words, JVAS would be even stronger if there were more volunteers.

Dave Bonta does a fantastic job with the JVAS website. Check with Dave if you'd like to be part of the website team, which is now a member of 1: Dave. That's right, he does that all by himself. Our website and Facebook pages are our connection to the world. Many thanks to Stan Kotala, too, for posting relevant content on the JVAS FB page.

Debra Grim is doing a great job as Membership Chair, keeping track of members and those whose membership has expired. Debra took over for Charlie Hoyer, who created the membership spreadsheet, so many thanks to Charlie, too. I'm about out of space, so a quick shout out to Susan Braun for organizing such wonderful field trips. She took over when Kristin Joivell moved to the Directors-at-Large position and is continuing to offer quality field experiences.

In closing, I'd like to thank Warren Baker and Marcia Bonta for serving as Directors. Their experience as long-time and dedicated members of JVAS makes their advice invaluable.

Last, but never least, a big thanks to our Historian, Mike Jackson. He also serves as sounding board, chauffeur, and willing partner in all sorts of endeavors. Thank you to all!

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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DIRECTORS-AT-LARGE

- ♦ Warren Baker
- ♦ Marcia Bonta
- ♦ Kristin Joivell

Juniata Valley Audubon Society Field Trips Spring 2018

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

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 10, if you plan to attend. We will leave Altoona at 8 am 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.



Juniata Valley Audubon Society 3rd Tuesday Evening Program - last one until September

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.

Our evening programs are designed for a general audience; all programs are free and open to the public. **A free dinner starts at 6:30 PM, and the meeting starts at 6:45 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, 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 Debra Grim's review of Andrew's book, *Searching for Pekpek*, on page 5.



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

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.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.

JVAS 2018 Conservation Award: Dr. Mark Bonta

Our Conservation Award Recipient this year is Dr. Mark Bonta, assistant professor of earth sciences, and a geographer with degrees from Penn State, University of Texas-Austin, and Louisiana State University. Mark focused his early professional career on community-based conservation and sustainable development in Honduras since becoming a Peace Corps Volunteer there in 1991.

His notable conservation achievements in Honduras include providing the impetus for the founding of two national parks and supporting research on and protection of endangered and endemic species such as the Zamiaaceae cycads, the Honduran Emerald hummingbird, the Red-throated Caracara, and the Three-wattled Bellbird. In 2012-2013, a National Geographic grant allowed him to coordinate a series of biodiversity expeditions to previously unexplored cloud forests in search of new species.

Bonta's groundbreaking work in ethno-ornithology includes the 2003 book "**Seven Names for the Bellbird**" (Univ. Texas Press) and several recent articles, chapters, and conference presentations.



With eyes to the sky and hands on his bins...

Mark has been a great asset to JVAS while teaching at Penn State Altoona - he has included his students in a number of JVAS programs and has inspired some of them, like Catie Farr and Jacob Vaughn, to become active in our chapter - helping to bring fresh ideas and enthusiasm.

Mark inspired Catie to start the Earth Week Birding Classic, which is now in its 3rd year. It's a fun, competitive birding activity that also helps to raise money for conservation.

Mark has also helped to make our Golden-winged Warbler habitat conservation projects a great success. From a 2-day workshop in 2015, we've expanded our efforts into a committee called **Partners in Neotropical Bird Conservation**, which includes members from Mississippi to New York. Mark has inspired 2 trips to Honduras: a Birding for Conservation Trip led by Mark in 2016 and the CACAO expedition in 2017 to Honduras led by Ian Gardner.

Now Mark is off on another project - he's moving to Mexico, starting an ecotourism company called Ornitofilia, so he'll be introducing gringos to the natural wonders of birds and butterflies in Mexico, as well as other countries in Central and South America.

He is still studying cycads - a primitive group of plants with a lot of human history. Oh yes, this summer he'll be chasing fire in Australia with several young birders from this area, hoping to film evidence that some of the raptors pick up burning sticks to start new grass fires, flushing prey into the open.

Even though Mark is moving to Mexico, he promises that he will continue to be a JVAS member - along with his new bride, Paola. We won't see him very often, though, so to show our appreciation for all of his efforts, we also gave him a few mementos:

- a shirt made by the Marcala Bird Club in Honduras, which we helped to sponsor
- an engraved coffee mug to honor his achievements in JVAS

We wish Mark safe travels and much success in his new endeavors.

Sunday, April 22, 2018 Earth Week Birding Classic Celebration

The **3rd annual Earth Week Birding Classic** at Penn State Altoona was celebrated on Earth Day, April 22 with a delicious banquet followed by a presentation by Dr. Laura Palmer on her bluebird research at Canoe Creek State Park. Her research was supported by funding from a previous Classic. Catie Farr, coordinator for the event, with help from her husband, Ethan Farr, and intern Matt Pettinato, provided a delicious meal, prizes, and beautiful white birch trophies to winning teams. The 11 teams that participated counted 133 species with pledges of over \$1,000. The team with the most species was The Bell Hollow Buteos, shown below in matching shirts. Congratulations! The donations will be used to support Sustainability Council efforts on campus, and other local conservation projects. Many thanks to local businesses for supporting the event and to Catie for organizing such a birdy and worthy event.



Front Row (L-R): Catie, Ethan, and Joe Farr, Laura Palmer, Jon Kauffman, Mark Nale, Lindera and John Carter.
Back Row (L-R): Laura Jackson, Bruce and Marcia Bonta, George Mahon, John Orr, Schawne Kilgus, Marr Karabinos, Mike Jackson, Michelle Smithbauer, Veronica Mysliwiec, & David Keller.



JVAS Bluebird Trail at Fort Roberdeau

by Dr. Stan Kotala

Central Pennsylvania was not a location of major battles during the American Revolution, but we do have a unique Revolutionary War site. In Sinking Valley, Tyrone Township, Blair County is Fort Roberdeau, a Blair County Historic and Natural Area. Fort Roberdeau was reconstructed during America's bicentennial year in 1976. Since then, the County of Blair has gradually acquired 230 acres surrounding the fort to protect the integrity of this site.

Unlike many Revolutionary War sites, Fort Roberdeau's surroundings are similar to those encountered in the mid-18th century. The park itself consists of 35 acres of woodland and 195 acres of fields, some of which are farmed.

The JVAS Bluebird Trail follows a long circuitous hedgerow through fields surrounding the fort. The grassland in which the boxes are located is enrolled in the USDA's Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program. JVAS installed and maintains 40 bluebird boxes along this trail, and, during the nesting season, May till September, this trail bustles with activity as eastern bluebirds and tree swallows vie for possession of these homes and later hunt for insects to feed their voracious young. Forty years ago, the eastern bluebird was a rare sight due to the elimination of hedgerows and the adoption of "clean" farming practices. The widespread installation of birdhouses specifically constructed for bluebirds has brought this species back to become a once-again common inhabitant of hedgerows and open areas.

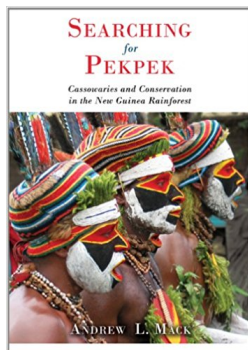
We welcome you to walk the JVAS Bluebird Trail at Fort Roberdeau at any time of year. Follow JVAS on Facebook to learn of upcoming events on this trail. JVAS FB page: www.facebook.com/juniatavalleyaudubon/



Searching for Pekpek: Cassowaries and Conservation in the New Guinea Rainforest

by Andrew L. Mack

Book Review by Debra Grim



Andrew Mack loves remote, pristine natural areas. His plan was to find a large unspoiled research area in Papua New Guinea (PNG) with a sizeable population of cassowaries (large flightless birds with colorful wattles, that can disembowel a man with their claws). The goal was to determine the role of these fruit-eating birds in distributing the seeds of forest trees. This would involve, much to the amusement of his Papua New Guinean assistants, collecting and studying cassowary droppings, known locally as “pekpek.”



Selecting a suitable study area, setting up infrastructure, and recruiting local help was a time-consuming, painstaking challenge. Local villages each had their own land, often disputed by neighbors. Everyone was eager to earn American research dollars. Mack had to negotiate a complex culture of superstitions, nepotism, jealousy, and hierarchical rules, which took many months and multiple trips between the U.S. and PNG, before he could even begin to collect data. His research grants and the good graces of his academic advisors were severely strained by the delays.

Eventually the research project came together, but Mack developed new plans in addition to his own study. He became discouraged with what he calls “Big Conservation.” These organizations would descend on Third World countries, their scientists would proclaim that nature reserves should be established, they would declare the result a success, and leave. The conservation efforts generally failed, as the local inhabitants had little interest in maintaining them and had no training or facility to do so. Mack wanted to build the capacity of PNG to produce its own conservation scientists, despite the indifference of Big Conservation. He succeeded in constructing a research station and bringing in other scientists, but also trained PNG scientists. This would create local desire to conserve. Proudly he watched the pool of trained PNG conservationists grow, become accepted in highly competitive university research programs overseas, then return home to continue their work.

Pekpek takes the reader on a journey through the joys of success, the surprises in meeting an unfamiliar culture, the drama of negotiating rugged terrain, and the bitterness of failure, told almost dispassionately, but still invoking strong emotions. Andrew Mack now lives in Pennsylvania.



Wetlands in Space

Using Earth Ecology to Colonize Mars!

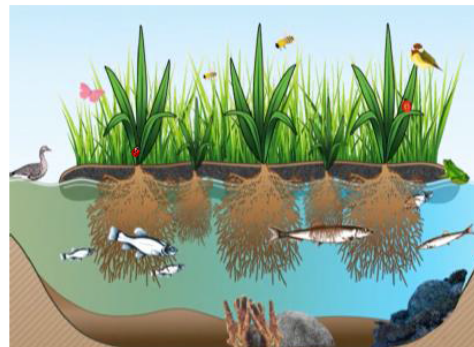
Altoona Area Public Library Theater 6 - 7 pm

May 17, June 18, June 25

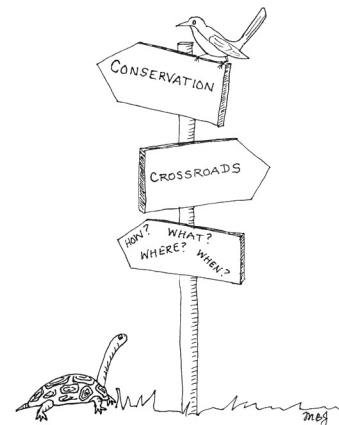
Suitable for students grades 9 - Adults

Call 946-0417 ext 125 to register

Colin Lennox, Director of Ecolands LLC, will lead a fun and practical series on the amazing power of wetlands. Learn how wetlands relate to whole ecosystem agriculture, and how wetlands will help humanity expand to the Moon, Mars, and the stars.



CONSERVATION CROSSROADS is a section of *The Gnatcatcher* that features environmental issues across a spectrum of local, national, and global concerns. Contact JVAS Vice-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.



1. Sunoco's Mariner East Pipeline across Pennsylvania

Pennsylvania judges reaffirmed their ruling of Sunoco as a public utility. The latest casualties are in eastern Pa, where local zoning ordinances are trumped by the "public utility" status granted by the PUC. Another consistent theme are the thousands of gallons of mud that are spilled as Sunoco drills under waterways and other obstructions.

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

JVAS is part of the Coalition to Protect Hawn's Peninsula since the area contains rare habitats and rare plants. That means we oppose any development on Hawn's Peninsula. Please send your comments to the Army Corps, asking for protection of this area, classified as an exceptional Biological Diversity Area. The Corps is revising the Master Plan, which will take about 2 years, so we need everyone to send comments. The next public meetings will be in August. Check out the Coalition's FB page <https://www.facebook.com/groups/295642750929912/>. Use the form to express your concerns over any development on the peninsula. The Corps wants to hear from all of us: www.nab.usace.army.mil/Raystown-Master-Plan-Revision/

3. Industrial Wind Projects

The Pennsylvania Game Commission voted unanimously to declare a moratorium on wind turbine projects on state game lands. We don't know, though, if wind companies will be allowed to use right of ways across game lands to develop projects on nearby properties. We applaud the Game Commission for protecting our forested ridges and wildlife from wind turbines.

4. Pumped Hydro Storage Projects (What are these? See the Sept./October issue of *The Gnatcatcher*)

Good News: Adam Rousselle, developer, has withdrawn more preliminary permits for pumped hydro storage projects on forested mountains. Bad News: Both projects in Blair County are moving forward.

5. Proposed Limestone Quarry near the Lower Trail in Blair Co., Pa.

The engineer reports that she is working on options to protect the caves and Lower Trail by possibly moving the mining operations closer to the highway and away from the caves and Lower Trail. Drilling will occur soon in agricultural areas to see what mineral resources can be extracted from those areas and studies will be done to see if mining the fields will impact the hydrogeology of the cave systems, which harbor an endemic springtail and several species of bats.

6. Climate Watch Coordinator, Deb Grove, writes:

Audubon has organized a new bird-related citizen science project called **Climate Watch**. Analysis of records dating back to the 60's show North American birds fit in one of 3 categories in terms of predicted response to climate change : (1) expansion of range, (2) shift of range, (3) contraction of range. To collect data on how climate change may affect bird species, participants will monitor two target species: **Eastern Bluebirds** and **Nuthatches**, either **White-breasted** or **Red-breasted**. Audubon has already set up squares that individuals can claim. Participants are asked to survey their squares for the target species one time between

May 15 & June 15 and once between **Jan 15 & Feb 15**. Data will be entered as an eBird list. For more detailed information you can email Deb (dsg4@psu.edu) or check the Audubon site, www.audubon.org/conservation/climate-watch



JUNIATA VALLEY AUDUBON
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Address Service Requested

**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 free of charge at our JVAS monthly meetings; it’s low caffeine and contains undertones of chocolate and cardamom.

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 ground, or whole bean, is \$12. A 2-pound bag of medium roast ground, or whole bean, is \$22. Coffee will be served at monthly meetings and will be available for purchase. Proceeds are used for bird conservation projects.

You can also order directly from <https://lencafarms.com> - go to their partner page: Ragged Edge Roasting Company and order Honduran coffee.

