

THE

GNATCATCHER



BLUESHIRT
GRAY
GNATCATCHER

JUNIATA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY

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Canis Major

The great Overdog.
That heavenly beast
With a star in one eye,
Gives a leap in the east.

He dances upright
All the way to the west
And never once drops
On his forefeet to rest.

I'm a poor underdog,
But tonight I will bark
With the great Overdog
That romps through the dark.

- Robert Frost

January Sky Show

TIME: 7:30 p.m.
DATE: January 31st - Tuesday
PLACE: Altoona Area High School Planetarium
6th Ave. & 13th Street, Altoona, Pa.

Our first meeting of the new year will be a different sort of special treat - a sky show at the Neil Armstrong Planetarium at Altoona High. Regis Huschak, the director, has worked up a program for us that should be both interesting and educational. He has plans to take us outside if the weather permits for practice in identifying the stars. The winter months are very good for observing constellations. Mr. Huschak will also relate various stories of origins to our interests in nature.

This special meeting of course takes the place of the regular gathering at the Twenty-Eighth Street Church of the Brethren. Please bring your friends and family to the planetarium. There is no cost as our group picks up the tab. So - bring anyone who might enjoy the sky show. Many of us have not yet been to the new high school complex.

Parking: No problem - just turn right off 6th Avenue onto 13th St. and head up past the firehouse (on the corner) and the planetarium and 5th Ave. to the first level parking lot behind the high school. This lot is cleared and has ample parking. There is a little half block walk down the hill so some people may want to park down on 5th Ave. between 12th St. and 13th St. The entrance to the planetarium is right on the 13th St. side.

February Banquet Our annual banquet will be held on February 21st - a Tuesday at the Twenty-Eighth St. Church of the Brethren, Union Ave. & 28th St., Altoona, Pa. Note that this is not the last Tuesday of the month. We had to change the date to one week earlier. All arrangements are now underway and the church will again serve us a great home cooked meal. Please get your tickets by February 15th, the deadline. Call Martha Sullivan (695-0052), Mary Slippey (695-5200), or Claire White (943-4516) for tickets. Mark these dates on your calendar and again feel perfectly free to attend this pleasant annual dinner meeting. We have had large crowds at past banquets and everyone should try to get to the church that night. Bring any guests you wish to.

Frank Dunstan, our Mid-Atlantic Regional Representative, will be the guest speaker for the evening. He will relate some of his Florida experiences to us and will give his insights on the national-branch relationship. This will be a very good program to top off a very good meal! Get your reservations now!

The Banquet Menu A vote will be taken at this month's meeting to choose the final menu for the February banquet. The two different main courses are: (1) browned beefsteak with scalloped potatoes and (2) ham with sweet potatoes. One of these will be selected. The other dishes will be listed in the February newsletter. The cost of the dinner is \$3.75.

New Bird Chart Don Wharton has made a new chart for listing all the birds sighted in one calendar year by our group. He will have this at the January meeting. Anyone who observes a bird for the first time can have it listed with the date and the observer's name listed. As the months pass this list will grow until we should have for the first time an accurate annual record of total different species sighted within a 25 mile radius of the Bird Count center at Culp (Sinking Valley). People may call him at 6956959 with any first sightings. There should be a lot of birds on the chart now.

The Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Birds (Eastern Region) This field guide is now available to members and may be purchased at the meeting. See the November Gnatcatcher for Don Wharton's excellent review.

Altoona Area Public Library Display We will have the front entrance display cases for our own exhibits the whole month of February. All members should think of what they might bring to the January meeting that could go into the display. Items relating to our group, nature, birds - specifically, nature crafts, books, nests, stuffed birds, anything. Give it some good thought and pack it in to the sky show meeting. Even one item will be a great help.

PAC Meeting Feb. 4th is the date. Please contact Bill Rosevear if able to attend as a rep from our group. (674-5021) Call him collect through the operator. The PAC meeting is at the William Penn Museum in Harrisburg on a Saturday.

Audubon Ecology Workshon Our group will sponsor one person for one week at the well known Audubon summer camp in Connecticut. The week can fall anywhere from June 25, to August 19th. If interested or if you can recommend someone for this scholarship, call or see Bill. Applicants may be members or not. They should have a need or use for the training in ecology given there. Brochures may be obtained at the meetings.

Nesting Cards Bill Rosevear has nesting cards for anyone who wants to keep records on an area. The cards are forwarded to

Ninth Annual Christmas Bird Count Twenty observers sighted 50 different birds on Dec. 18th for a new count record. Also 2 additional birds (meadowlark and kingfisher) were seen in the count period for a grand total of 52! With all the heavy rain it was not until evening when the tallies were made that anyone thought it would be such a good day. The teams worked hard in the field and feeder counters did a great job. A detailed listing and report will be published in the next issue of the Gnatcatcher. The highlights: Don Wharton and Greg Myers saw an immature peregrine falcon at Canoe Creek State Park. Most rare and unexpected! They and Fran Burgoon also saw 4 bluebirds. Other notable species seen included: horned grebes, canada geese, cedar waxwings, common grackles, red-winged blackbirds, turkeys (2), red-breasted nuthatch (1), purple finches, pine siskins and winter wrens. And, of course, horned larks were seen only 8 this year.

Elections: Important elections for all 4 officers will take place at the Tuesday, January 31st meeting. Officers nominated are: Truth Closé: vice-president: Ann Borland: secretary; Colette Heller: treasurer. Installation of officers takes place at the February banquet meeting.

The Gnatcatcher
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