

## President's Message:

2019 is the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of JVAS and we were able to celebrate this at the annual banquet on April 16th. We were joined by past presidents, current members, partners in our conservation efforts and we topped the night off with a great presentation by Andy Mack. We raised the most money ever from the silent auction and were able to sell our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary insulated mugs, and shade grown coffee, which are both still available at our general monthly meetings.

April also marks my one-year anniversary as president and my three-year anniversary as a member of JVAS. At every event I am reminded of how great the community of JVAS members past and present really are. The active conservation efforts, the hard work and dedication of all of our board members to get together and carry out the mission of JVAS, and the willingness of the general members and community members to get together every month to learn and share in environmental topics and efforts all amaze me. It is my privilege to be able to work and lead JVAS and I am excited to see what the next 50 years will bring.

Thank you for your continued support! Catie



JVAS Presidential Lineup: L to R: Bill Rosevear, Laura Jackson, Dave Bonta, Marcia Bonta, Cindy Moore, Dave Kyler, Catie Farr (current JVAS president)

Photo by Mark Nale. More banquet photos will be available on the JVAS FB page and website. Many thanks to Mark for his service as official photographer of the evening. 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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#### COLETTE HELLER (1917-2019)-Marcia Bonta

Longtime JVAS member Colette Heller passed away on April 2 after a week's illness and just ten days before turning 102. Although she had been living with her daughter Nancy's family in Ohio for most of this century, she continued to have an active interest in JVAS and attended meetings during visits back to her Bellwood home.

A native of Flemington, New Jersey, Colette graduated from Trenton State Teachers' College (now The College of New Jersey) and taught business subjects there for several years.

In 1966 she moved to Bellwood with her husband Bill and her three children and often substitute taught at Bellwood High School. She joined a fledgling JVAS sometime in the mid-1970s and was first mentioned in the January 1977 Gnatcatcher when she reported a mockingbird at her suet feeder. Colette loved birds and the rest of the natural world, but she was also a consummate people person, the first to meet and greet visitors and intensely loyal to her friends.

She believed in educating people about the natural world and one of her pet projects was designing nature displays for public libraries, directing JVAS's first effort in 1978 and continuing such work through the next two decades.

Colette was president of JVAS from 1980 to 1982 and again from October 1983 to April of 1984. During that time, she formed a Program Committee to plan a year's programs and field trips and publish them in a brochure that could be printed and distributed in public places in an attempt to attract new members.

In 1985 Colette launched a Speaker's Bureau with many members signing up to speak to groups about their favorite natural subjects. A list of the subjects was added to the yearly brochure. Colette spoke most often on bird-feeding until she moved to Ohio.

She helped with bird seed sales and organized most of the banquets in the 1980s. Colette was my chief advisor when I was president of JVAS (1984-88). She then served as a JVAS director, was an active member of the International Issues Group, and headed the Education Committee in 1991 and beyond. She also found elementary school teachers willing to use "Audubon Adventures," a newsletter designed by National Audubon for children.

Finally, she was in charge of the Planning Committee for the window and bird-feeding station at Fort Roberdeau in memory of deceased members Al Burd and Gene Root.

Colette was an active force in JVAS for many years and was dearly loved by my family and me, and I'm certain by many other JVAS members who received her care and concern. She will be greatly missed.

# Juniata Valley Audubon Society 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday Evening Programs

Check our Facebook page for updates.

Our evening programs are designed for a general audience; all programs are free and open to the public. A free dinner, including hot, shade-grown, organic coffee, starts at 6:00 PM, followed by the meeting at 6:45 PM. We meet in the Bellwood-Antis Library at 526 Main Street, Bellwood, PA. Please join us!

**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 a short distance; the library is on your right.

Tuesday May 21, 2019: Preventing Tick Bites and Tick-borne Diseases by Amber Altiero, RN.

# A free dinner starts at 6 pm: taco bar, rice, beans, veggies, fruit and cinnamon chips and dip, hot shade coffee and juice.



Originally funded by the PA Dept. of Health, Dare 2B Tick Aware uses the most current research available to help you prevent tick bites and how to get help if you do get Lyme Disease. PA leads the nation in new cases - don't be a statistic! Learn how to protect yourself and your family.



#### Tuesday June 18, 2019: 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! JVAS will provide grilled chicken for everyone. We hope everyone will bring a covered dish to share. 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. 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.

# **FLOWER POWER EVENT**



Saturday May 4, 2019 Central Pennsylvania Native Plant Festival Boal Mansion, 163A Boal Estate Drive, Boalsburg PA 16827 JVAS plans to have a table at this event - contact Laura Jackson if you'd like to help. Setup will be 9:30 AM with the event running from 10 AM to 3 PM.

# JVAS Field Trips Spring 2019

Field trip chair is Susan Braun: <u>braun3112@gmail.com</u> (814)574-0795 Check our Facebook page for updates or contact Susan.

## Saturday May 11: Migration Walk - Bullit Run to Lower Green's Run 7:30 am - 11:30 am

Join Susan Braun for the PA Migration Count. We'll take a bird walk and count every bird we see or hear along a flat two mile walk from Bullit Run to Lower Green's Run in Bald Eagle State Park. Afterwards, we can head to the Kitchen Witch in Howard for a bite to eat.

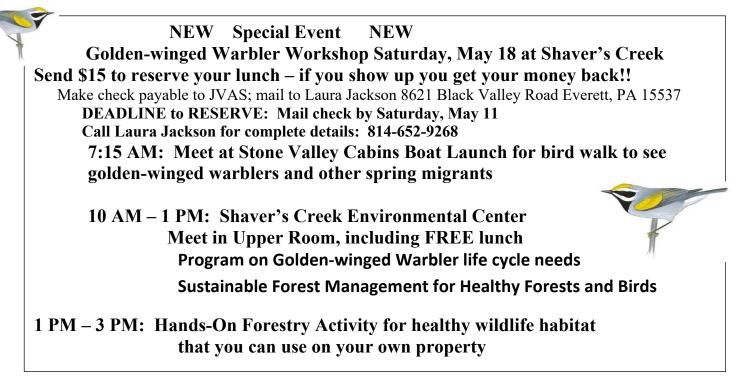
Meet at the Lower Green's Run Parking lot in Bald Eagle State Park. We'll leave some cars there and shuttle to Bullit Run to begin our walk. <u>https://goo.gl/maps/zmj2n5Xn6Co</u> Contact: Susan Braun <u>braun3112@gmail.com</u> (814)574-0795 for information.

# Saturday May 18: Canoe Creek State Park 9 am – 1 pm

We will walk the Limestone and Moore's Hill trails to admire wild phlox, trout lilies, yellow lady'sslippers, and other wonderful wildflowers. Bring lunch and water, be prepared for a hill climb and rocky trail. (You can also return along the Limestone trail without climbing the hill, and still see many flowers.) 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. <u>https://goo.gl/maps/Y35pAJRTHhK2</u> Contact Susan Braun <u>braun3112@gmail.com</u> (814)574-0795 or Debra Grim <u>dsgrim02@gmail.com</u> (814) 644-5285.

## Saturday May 25: Warbler Walk at Mountain Meadows, Bedford Co. 8 am – 11 am

Mike and Laura Jackson did a forest habitat project in the fall of 2014 for Golden-winged Warblers and other birds that need young forests for breeding habitat. Mike and Laura will lead us in search of Golden-winged, Kentucky, Hooded, and Cerulean Warblers, as well as Yellow-breasted Chat and other spring songsters. Bring lunch and water. Call 814-652-9268 or jacksonlaura73@gmail.com. **Directions to 8621 Black Valley Road, Everett, PA:** From Bedford, take Rt. 30 E. to Everett, turn Right onto the West Bridge on W. 5<sup>th</sup> Ave., then take an immediate Right on Black Valley Road. Follow Black Valley Road for 2.5 miles. You will pass a bright red/white barn very close to the road on the Right. Continue for another half-mile until you see a gravel lane on the Right. There is a sign that says, "The Jacksons'" at the beginning of the lane. After turning Right onto the lane, continue up the mountain for 1/2 mile, staying straight, until you come to the Jacksons' house.

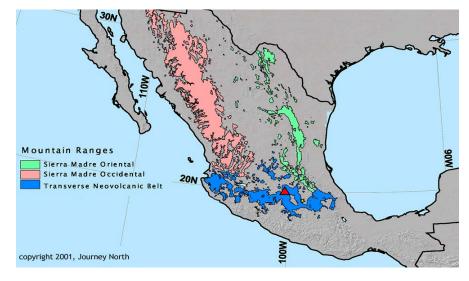


# A Visit to the 'Sacred Fir' Forests (with a few Monarchs, too!) By Beth Glasser

[Note: This article was originally printed in the Pennsylvania Forest Stewardship Newsletter. Permission was given by the author, Beth Glasser., to reprint in *The Gnatcatcher*. In addition to being a Pennsylvania Forest Steward, Beth is also a JVAS member. It is also important to note that Mark Bonta organized and led this trip. If you would like to visit the Monarch Sanctuaries in February, 2020, contact Mark at markabonta@yahoo.com. There is still space for a few more eco-travelers.]

In January 2019, several PAFS (myself and my husband Ron Gilliland, along with Laura and Mike Jackson) had the extraordinary opportunity to visit two of the over-wintering sites of the Monarch butterfly. These sites are located in central Mexico, in the Transverse Neovolcanic Belt which straddles rural areas north of Mexico City. Oyamel firs (*Abies religiosa*, so named for the cruciform shape of its terminal branches) grow only at high altitudes, from 2400 to 3600 meters (roughly 7500-12,000 feet).

All monarchs in eastern North America migrate from their summer locations to this part of Mexico, where they spend the winter. Though the migration is not fully understood, it is believed that the monarchs seek out this habitat as it is cool and moist, at a time when much of the surrounding area is quite dry from November to May. There



are twelve designated over-wintering sites for the butterflies.

The Oyamel forest is considered Mexico's most endangered, now at only about 2% of its original size. These 'sacred firs' are a relic of earlier eras, and are believed to have 'retreated' to the higher elevations of these isolated mountains as the climate became warmer and drier.

Visiting these forests during the monarchs' over-wintering was an extraordinary experience. I still remember learning about this phenomenon as a child and thinking how wonderful it would be to see. And indeed, it was both beautiful and moving. Imagine being surrounded by majestic and rare trees

and literally hundreds of millions of butterflies! On our first day, we went to El Rosario, the largest of the preserves. After arriving at the entrance, we hiked on trails through a mixed understory dominated by the towering trees above. Having arrived mid-morning, the air was still fairly cool, and the majority of the butterflies were still to be found on the trees. Unbelievable numbers of them were massed on the boughs, and, as the day warmed, more and more of them took flight. (And yes, you *can* hear them fly!) By mid-afternoon, it was a continuous stream of monarchs, many heading down to a river in the lower elevations.

We were informed that they estimated that there were 70-100 MILLION butterflies just at this one site on that day. We later found out that the 2019 migration is the largest that has been seen in twelve years, with almost 15 acres of occupied forest canopy, translating into approximately 300 million overwintering butterflies! <sup>1</sup>

In early afternoon, we stopped to marvel at the spectacle in a particularly sunny spot. I was soon engulfed in butterflies - Ron counted more than thirty on my back alone! It was magical.

The next day, we visited a much smaller and even more remote site, Sierra Chincua. We chose to hike up the relatively steep mountainside, though horses were available as well. At the top, we were rewarded with an extraordinary view of the surrounding lowlands, which enabled us to appreciate just how isolated these mountain forests are.





And 'therein lies the rub,' as they say. This singular phenomenon is threatened by climate change and by agricultural pressures. Climate change is stressing the Oyamels, as water is becoming scarcer and the surrounding areas warmer. Trees at lower elevations have already shown the effects of this. A related problem is extreme weather, which affects both the fragile, migrating butterflies, but also the forests, which have suffered storm damage. (In 2015, for example, 180 acres of the forest were degraded in a wind storm.<sup>2</sup>)

The same volcanic soil that created the Oyamel forests is also its biggest threat. One of Mexico's premier agricultural zones is found in the surrounding region, where the rich volcanic soils produce many crops of great value to the country and the world. The biggest immediate threat is avocado farming. Production has continued to increase, largely because of the demand for avocados in the US. The state of Michoacán, where the Oyamel forests are located, is responsible for about 80 percent of avocados exported worldwide. The deforestation of steeper slopes also threatens the nearby communities. We stopped at a small village, Angangueo, that was badly damaged by a landslide in 2010. Nineteen people died, and yet, as we left town and drove through the area that was destroyed, continuing agricultural expansion was evident.

Because of the remoteness of the area, though tourism has increased, it is unlikely to develop enough to offset these economic pressures. (And the remote nature of these sites may also protect them from being threatened by over-tourism!) There are efforts to better protect the existing forests. A forest geneticist at the Universidad Michoacana de San Nicolás de Hidalgo, Cuauhtémoc Sáenz-Romero, is working on an 'assisted migration' project to try to move the firs to higher slopes and elevations <sup>3</sup>. And the WWF and others are continuing to educate farmers on the dangers of deforestation and its effect on soil health and stability.

We left the monarchs with mixed emotions - the joy of witnessing this rare phenomenon of nature yet wondering if the magnificent Oyamel firs can survive both our warming planet and the pressures of human development. We can only hope that the firs - and the monarchs - will persevere.



"Happiness is a butterfly, which when pursued, is always just beyond your grasp, but which, if you will sit down quietly, may alight upon you."

Monarch References:

- 1. World Wildlife Fund [WWF] Mexico, http://www.wwf.org.mx/noticias/?uNewsID=342230)
- 2. http://blogs.edf.org/growingreturns/2016/12/20/three-threats-to-the-monarch-butterflys-winterhabitat-and-what-we-can-do-about-it/
- 3. https://e360.yale.edu/features/to\_protect\_monarch\_butterfly\_a\_plan\_to\_save\_the\_sacred\_firs

Monarch Resources:

- US Forest Service: https://www.fs.fed.us/wildflowers/pollinators/Monarch\_Butterfly/migration/index.shtml
- 2. Four Wings and a Prayer, by Sue Halpern
- 3. Journey North: <u>http://journeynorth.com/</u>

# **Allegheny Front Hawk Watch**

Big Day on March 14, 2019 by Tom Kuehl

Hawk Watchers live for those days when epic flights of migrating raptors provide for special and lost-lasting memories. March 14, 2019 was such a day at the Allegheny Front Hawk Watch. Never a science when trying to predict when those days will happen, however when it's the peak time for migration and the winds are favorable for a hawk watch – GO! For spring Golden Eagle migration, more speculation than science, however a second day of east winds was a likely contributor for pushing raptors onto Pennsylvania's western-most ridge; and a quiet morning turned into a very busy afternoon as strong east winds and a warming sun provided for ideal conditions.



Golden Eagle flies past the moon. Photo by Dave Poder

For the 2019 season March game in like a lion with almost two feet of snow and ice socking in the Allegheny Front Hawk Watch. Kudos to Compiler Bob Stewart for getting the watch re-opened. While no significant snow fell over the last week, overnight cold provided for crusty morning walks to the northern end of the watch site for observers to position themselves for the flight. Parking spots were still at a premium, and so an ambitious Ed Gowarty Sr. decided to dig a new spot during the morning lull.

So often the case, and especially so in the spring, there is little to no reward for an early arrival. For today, just a little reward when an adult Golden Eagle floated low over the site at 10:15am. Shortly thereafter, perhaps the same Golden Eagle rushed past us to the south – I hoped that it was in hot pursuit of a ground hog ready to peak from its hole to see if winter was over. Alas, it was to be the only bird of the morning. Hey, no wind, no sun and, as of yet, not even any vultures up and about – just another spring day at the Allegheny Front.

It would remain cloudy for the next 3 hours, however a stronger wind got the flight started. Surprising for the Allegheny Front, the day before had provided for a good flight of 11 Red-shoulder Hawks; and another good showing today with a tally of 16. Adults were stunning in the blue sky and a juvenile thrilled us with a close pass just over our heads. And for today, Cooper's Hawk added to the mix with the days total of 18; with several seen doing the Harrier-like display flight as they passed below us in the valley.

Still cloudy through the 1 to 2 o'clock hour, however the wind had started to pick up. Counter Dave Poder would close out the 2 o'clock hour with the day's migrating raptor tally at 63; however, with still just one Golden Eagle, I was left to wonder if, despite a favorable south east wind, would this day just be a bust.

Fortunately, that would not be the case for this day. The skies continued to clear, and the wind got stronger. The 2:35 pm Golden Eagle broke the eagle-jam and then no break in the action for Counter Dave for the rest of the day. The 2-3 pm total was five Golden Eagles, then 11 for 3-4 pm and a remarkable 22 for 4-5 pm, which included a kettle of seven; and another Goldie trailing that group, so eight in sight at the same time! Dave Kipp, working to drain his third camera battery of the day, snapped merrily as the many late afternoon raptors passed by the moon in the eastern sky.

Another 14 Golden Eagles from 5-6 pm as the flight continued at a torrid pace until dying out suddenly at 6pm – there we be only one migrant for the day, a long-tailed raptor (that could have been a Northern Harrier or Cooper's hawk) that streaked through the low blinding sun to west.

Today's total tally was 257 and the Golden Eagle number was 53. Per Compiler Bob Stewart's research, the tally of 257 was a new record non- Broad-winged Hawk day for the spring, surpassing the tally of 231 recorded by counters Gene and Nancy Flament on March 15, 2003. The 53 Golden Eagle tally is a new spring record, besting the 51 on March 13, 2015 recorded by Counter Ed Gowarty Sr., and (for the moment) ranks as the fourth highest count of Golden Eagles for both Spring and Fall. (See Top Ten Table below). With the warming temperatures and calls of gulls the day felt like a summer day at the beach, and we certainly are all grateful to have experienced this flight and appreciate the conservation work that made it possible.

#GE	Date	Counter
74	Oct 25 2015	Deb Bodenschatz
66	Oct 26 2018	Bob Stewart, Ed Gowarty, Jr.
61	Nov 1 2011	Jim Rocco
53	Mar 14 2019	Dave Poder
51	Nov 23 2003	Mark McConaughy
51	Mar 13 2015	Ed Gowarty Sr
50	Nov 15 2017	Rosemary McGlynn
45	Nov 14 2005	Dick Byers
43	Nov 4 2013	Deb Bodenschatz
42	Nov 30 2013	Deb Bodenschatz
42	1100 20 2013	

#### Top Golden Eagle Days as of March 14, 2019 by Allegheny Front Hawk Watch Compiler Bob Stewart

**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 <u>www.JVAS.org</u> Click on the Conservation tab.



## Industrial Wind Project Proposed for Dunning/Evitt's Mountain in Bedford

JVAS members and Dutch Corner residents worked hard for nine years to inventory historic resources in a beautiful valley in northern Bedford County called Dutch Corner. Their hard work paid off and on August 17, 2015 Dutch Corner was listed in the National Register of Historic Places as the largest Historic Agricultural District in Pennsylvania. The "Corner" is bounded by Evitt's Mountain to the east, which curves north to parallel to I-99. The section parallel to I-99 is called Brumbaugh and then another name change with Dunning's Mountain closer to Altoona.

Why would JVAS take on such a mighty task? Dutch Corner showcases the historic farming patterns of woodlots and fence rows that provide much-needed habitat for many wildlife species. Red-headed woodpeckers breed there, as do American Kestrels – both species are in decline. The clean mountain streams contain healthy habitats for wood turtles and the rocky mountain outcrops on Evitt's Mountain provide ideal habitat for a species of concern, the timber rattlesnake.

Unfortunately, most of the mountain is owned by absentee private landowners who don't understand all the negative impacts of industrial wind projects on steep, forested mountains. In addition to forest fragmentation, increased runoff, habitat destruction, and loss of wildlife habitat, the industrial wind project would negate the bucolic quality of Dutch Corner and degrade its historic status.

JVAS pledges to work with local residents who oppose the project proposed by Competitive Power Ventures (CPV) which is in the process of building a large natural gas plant in Cambria County.

## But cats kill more birds than wind turbines, right?

That may be correct, but cats tend to kill yard birds and not the large raptors like eagles and hawks that are often killed or displaced by wind turbines.

One of our JVAS members has a suggestion that helps to reduce the number of bird-kills by cats. If you are a cat lover and allow your cats to have unsupervised outdoor time, please consider Denice's suggestion in the next article.

#### Outdoor Cats: A Way to Minimize Bird Kills by Denice Rodaniche



True confession: Our cats spend time outside. It started with an earlier and difficult-to-overturn precedent with our rescue feral cat who refused to be confined to the house. After Alley died we were persuaded to rescue two male kittens, but this time my husband was sure that our new fenced garden could be made escape-proof. Wishful thinking! Unfortunately, many labor hours (and dollars) were expended on at least five enclosure iterations that included chicken wire, slatted fencing, even electrified wiring that only managed to make my hair stand on end a few times. With their claws intact, there was no outsmarting our escape artists. At least the garden and patio returned to its more attractive state minus those eyesore contraptions.

Although we are very attached to our crazy cats, will you believe that we also care very much about birds? Two years ago, I found the website **BirdsBeSafe.com**. They sell colorful collars that slip over the easy-release collars. Hopeful but skeptical, we gave them a try. In prior years Alonso and Balthazar (names were given by the Humane Society) captured at least six to eight birds a season, and that probably doesn't include what didn't come home as gifts. Since using the collars, I have found only two birds in two years. Most of our backyard birds are Passeriformes or songbirds. They see bright colors especially well because of unique eye anatomy: a fourth type of cone and extra rods. The fourth cone emphasizes bright colors in the birds' visual field, and the extra rods help those colors be seen well even at dawn or dusk, although our cats are indoors by then. Non-songbirds like doves and woodpeckers don't have that fourth cone but are usually feeding with the songbirds and seem to benefit from their warning signals and movement.

Our property is in the city (Altoona) and backs up to Mill Run stream, and we've taken precautions. The main birdfeeder is gated so most birds can safely feed below. A nearby perching bush is also surrounded by a gate to deter ambushes, and the other feeders are high. Most of our grounds, and that of our neighbors, are not filled with dense cover, so our birds have a good view of any stalking behavior. Being retired, I am around more to observe the cats' behavior from my kitchen window. They are still successfully hunting small rodents, but they seem to have learned the futility of bird hunting and now spend more time just sitting on the porch steps. Perhaps they are thinking, "Why waste the energy?" Our birds should be given credit too for figuring out what that collar conveys.

I truly wish that I could keep our two hooligans indoors. There are many other reasons to do so. But, once a cat has experienced the joys of freedom, especially my American Yellow, no number of toys and playtime can compete. Maybe someday we'll go back to just having a dachshund.

JUNIATA VALLEY AUDUBON PO BOX 42 TYRONE, PA 16686-0042 Address Service Requested

A Special Shout Out to Our Lifetime Members

WARREN C. BAKER

TERRY CARNILA

ANN ECHOLS

JOHN HUNTER ORR





#### 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 market their organic, shade-grown, coffee in the U.S. Freshly brewed Lenca coffee will be available free of charge at our JVAS monthly meetings; it is low in 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 order Honduran Marcala coffee directly from Ragged Edge: <a href="https://www.squareup.com/store/the-ragged-edge-roasting-co">www.squareup.com/store/the-ragged-edge-roasting-co</a> or purchase it at our monthly meetings.