

# The Gnatcatcher

## Newsletter of Juniata Valley Audubon

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as a benefit for members of the...

JUNIATA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY



### President's Message:

It's been a hot summer, so aren't you interested in finding out how to capture all that solar power? We are proud to announce that JVAS is sponsoring a solar rooftop co-op called **Solar United Neighbors (SUN)**! One of our members who lives in Cambria County is already part of SUN with 28 solar panels on her roof. We also applaud other members who have solar. You may wonder why a bird group like JVAS is sponsoring solar, but just remember that rooftop solar helps to preserve important bird habitat since it reduces the demand for fossil fuels.

We are working with Henry McKay, SUN's program director in Pennsylvania.

Henry writes,

*"Solar United Neighbors is a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping people go solar, join together, and fight for their energy rights. We'd like to bring together individuals and organizations in and around Blair County who are interested in helping to launch and promote a local solar co-op."*

*Solar co-ops are nonprofit programs that make it easier for homeowners and small businesses to go solar. People interested in going solar join the solar co-op, learn about solar technology and incentives, receive unbiased technical guidance from Solar United Neighbors, and pool their collective buying power to get a better deal on a solar installation. Solar co-ops are a powerful tool to increase solar adoption and build a stronger movement of solar advocates.*

*Solar co-ops are administered by Solar United Neighbors but require the assistance of motivated individuals and local partners to spread the word in the target communities and drive sign-ups. Right now, we are trying to determine if there is enough interest and support from local organizations in the Blair County area to launch a successful solar co-op."*

**Watch for a planning meeting announcement later this fall.**

Thank you for your continued support!  
Catie

More information on Solar United Neighbors: <https://www.solarunitedneighbors.org/pennsylvania/>

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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## Juniata Valley Audubon Society Evening Programs

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., except in December when we meet at the Altoona Library in the Theater room. 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.

### Program: Tuesday, September 17, 2019

Dinner: Pizza, salad, and dessert from Schraff's

#### Ron Rohrbaugh (Audubon Pa. Ornithologist): *A Look at How Birds Inform Conservation and Human Culture.*

During his presentation Ron will talk about how birds serve as bioindicators to help guide global and regional conservation priorities, including adaptation to climate change; and how birds truly are "canaries in the coal mine" when it comes to protecting human health. In this context, he will describe how the needs of birds are guiding landscape-scale forest management practices in Pennsylvania.

### Program: Tuesday, October 15, 2019

Dinner: Butternut squash soup (vegan and gluten-free, stuffed pepper halves (gluten-free), roasted veggies and cookies and candy for dessert

#### Nick Bolgiano: *Evidence for West Nile-Related Avian Declines.*

Nick will share his research on West Nile Virus (WNV) and how it has impacted bird populations, with suggestions on what landowners can do to reduce WNV risk.

### Program: Tuesday, November 19, 2019

Dinner: Pasta Bar with gluten-free option, meatballs, chicken, salad, rolls, apple pie bars and gluten-free cookies for dessert

#### *Shale Play* reading by author Julia Spicher Kasdorf, illustrated by Steven Rubin's photographs.

Their book, *Shale Play*, will be on sale for a discounted \$20. See more details at <https://www.psupress.org/books/titles/978-0-271-08093-2.html>

**Program: Thurs., Dec. 19, 2019 6:30pm Altoona Library, Theater Room** **Night at the Movies: "Our Planet" w/David Attenborough** Experience our planet's natural beauty and see how climate change impacts all living things.

No dinner, but lots of Christmas cookies, popcorn and juice will be available for all to enjoy.

## JVAS Field Trips Fall 2019

Field trip chair is Susan Braun: [braun3112@gmail.com](mailto:braun3112@gmail.com) (814)574-0795

Check our Facebook page for updates or contact Susan.

### Saturday, Sept 7, 2019: 10 am - 12 pm Lower Trail Habitat Restoration Walk



Come join Greg Williams of [Pennsylvania Interfaith Power and Light](#) to learn about habitat restoration projects on the Lower Trail in Williamsburg. We'll visit a beautiful wildflower area that was created two years ago using seeds of native plants purchased from Ernst Seed.

Contact: Susan Braun 814-574-0795 or [braun3112@gmail.com](mailto:braun3112@gmail.com)

Meet at the Williamsburg Trailhead, Lower Trail, corner of E 1st Street and Liberty St, Williamsburg, PA  
<https://goo.gl/maps/9nJCKfE8Mu2ykqXY8>

**Directions:** From 22, turn onto Route 866 at the base of Short Mountain, travel into the town of Williamsburg. At the first stop sign, proceed straight for two blocks; trail head is on the left.

### Saturday, Sept 21, 2019: 8am - 10am Bird Walk at Canoe Creek State Park

Join John Carter and Mark Nale for a leisurely bird trip around one of the best central Pennsylvania state parks. We will start near the sand beach scanning the lake for waterfowl and then trek about 2 miles around the park for warblers and fall migrants! Wear appropriate hiking shoes and bring binoculars.

Binoculars are available if you need them. Contact: Susan Braun 814-574-0795 or

[braun3112@gmail.com](mailto:braun3112@gmail.com)

Meet at the parking area on the far left. Canoe Creek State Park, 205 Canoe Creek Rd, Hollidaysburg, PA

<https://goo.gl/maps/Y35pAJRTHhK2>

**Directions:** Enter from Turkey Valley Road, pass the park office and park toward the left in the large parking lot near the lake.

### Sunday, Oct 6, 2019: 1pm - 4pm State Game Lands 166 Exploration

We'll take an easy out and back walk along a dirt road to explore State Game Land #166 in Catherine Township, Williamsburg, PA. This area includes Beaver Dam Wetlands Natural Heritage Area - a large wetland complex between the ridges of Canoe Mountain and Brush Mountain, that forms the headwaters of Canoe Creek. We'll meet at gate 7. The road is in good shape but we will carpool further into the game land. Bring water and a snack. Since we will be walking in a game land, don't forget to wear blaze orange. Be sure to check out [State Game Land 166](#) on Facebook for a preview of this beautiful area.

**Contact:** Susan Braun [braun3112@gmail.com](mailto:braun3112@gmail.com) (814)574-0795

Meet at Gate 7 at State Game Land #166, Beaver Dam Road Ext, Williamsburg, PA

<https://goo.gl/maps/zxQVid3o6CehRCraA>

**Directions:** From the intersection of Rt 22 and Beaver Dam Road, drive 2.6 miles on Beaver Dam Road. Beaver Dam Road will meet Scotch Valley Road. Continue straight onto Beaver Dam Road Ext which is a gravel/dirt road. Drive 1.3 miles until you come to gate #7, with parking area on the right. We will meet here and carpool several miles down the road to another parking area where we will begin our walk.



**Sunday, Oct. 27, 2019: 8am – 4pm**

**Allegheny Front Hawk Watch**

Meet at the Eat 'n Park in Altoona at 8am to carpool to the Hawk Watch. Bring water, lunch, snacks, binoculars, warm clothes, and a comfy chair.

**Directions and Details about the Hawk Watch:**

**<http://www.alleghenyplateauaudubon.org/hawk-watch.php>**

Contact: Susan Braun if you want to carpool.

**Saturday, Nov 10, 2019: 1pm – 4pm**

**Shaver's Creek Walk and Live Raptor Tour**

We will take a bird walk before enjoying a guided tour of the Raptor Center, followed by a visit to the native animal exhibits in the new Center.

**Directions:** Shaver's Creek is located at 3400 Discovery Rd, Petersburg, Pa.

Contact Susan Braun if you want to carpool.

VISIT  
[www.ShaversCreek.org](http://www.ShaversCreek.org)  
to learn more



**Friday, November 29, 2019: 11am – 2pm**

**Post-Thanksgiving Day Hike**

Join Randy Caber to shed those turkey and pumpkin pie pounds while enjoying an easy hike (about 6 miles) from Mount Etna to Alfarata on the Lower Trail.

**Directions:** Any volunteers to carpool should park at Alfarata by 10:30am.

Msg/text Randy at 814-207-4893. All others should meet at the Mt. Etna parking lot at 11am.

Optional: bring water and a snack. **Blaze orange must be worn.**

**Monday, December 31, 2019: 11am - 2pm**

**Last Day Resolution Hike**

If your New Year's Resolution is to get outdoors, get started on it a day early! End your year at the Peace Chapel Trail System in Huntingdon as we hike approximately 3 to 4 leisurely miles together on the last day of 2019. As we hike, we can search for animal tracks in the snow (hopefully) and winter plants (definitely). Meet at Detwiler Field in Huntingdon at 11am. Bring a snack and drink for the hike.

Optional: we can visit one of the local venues in nearby Huntingdon for hot chocolate and warm food after the hike! If you need more information or have questions, contact trip leader, Kristin Joivell, at 814-386-6267 or at [kristinjean@hotmail.com](mailto:kristinjean@hotmail.com).



**New web-based tool guides available for high risk species**



The Pennsylvania Game Commission and the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission are offering a free, interactive web-based map that puts the 2015-2025 Pennsylvania Wildlife Action Plan at your fingertips.

It's called the **Conservation Opportunity Area Tool**, available at <https://wildlifeactionmap.pa.gov>

You can create a map for an area you plan to visit, or property that you own; or you can search for a particular species' range. A map of an area will produce a report with lists of species and related conservation actions. You have to register first and accept the terms of agreement. Projects requiring PNDI review must still be conducted through Pennsylvania Conservation Explorer.

## SCREENING OF ELEPHANT PATH/ NJAIA NJOKU AT PENN STATE



**Date: September 25, 2019 Time: 6:30-9:00pm (allows time after the 52 min. film for discussion)**

*Elephant Path / Njaia Njoku* directed by **Todd McGrain** will have a community screening at Penn State, on Wednesday, September 25, 2019. The screening is co-sponsored by the Penn State University EcoAction Club and the Sierra Club Moshannon Group.

*Elephant Path / Njaia Njoku* film is an indelible tale of friendship and commitment set against the luminous beauty of the Central African Rainforest. Together, elephant behavioral biologist, **Andrea Turkalo**, and indigenous tracker, **Sessely Bernard**, will be tested by the realities of war and the limits of hope for the majestic animals they have committed their lives to study and protect.

**Co-sponsored by:** Sierra Club Moshannon Group, Penn State University EcoAction Club  
**Location:** HUB 117 Freeman Auditorium, Penn State University, University Park, PA 16802

Director Todd McGrain and film subject Andrea Turkalo will be in attendance for the Q&A, directly following the screening

**Elephant Path Film Website:** <http://elephantpathfilm.org/> **FB:** <http://www.facebook.com/elephantpathfilm>

JVAS birders surveyed birds in State Game Lands 198 for the PGC last summer. A few bird highlights:

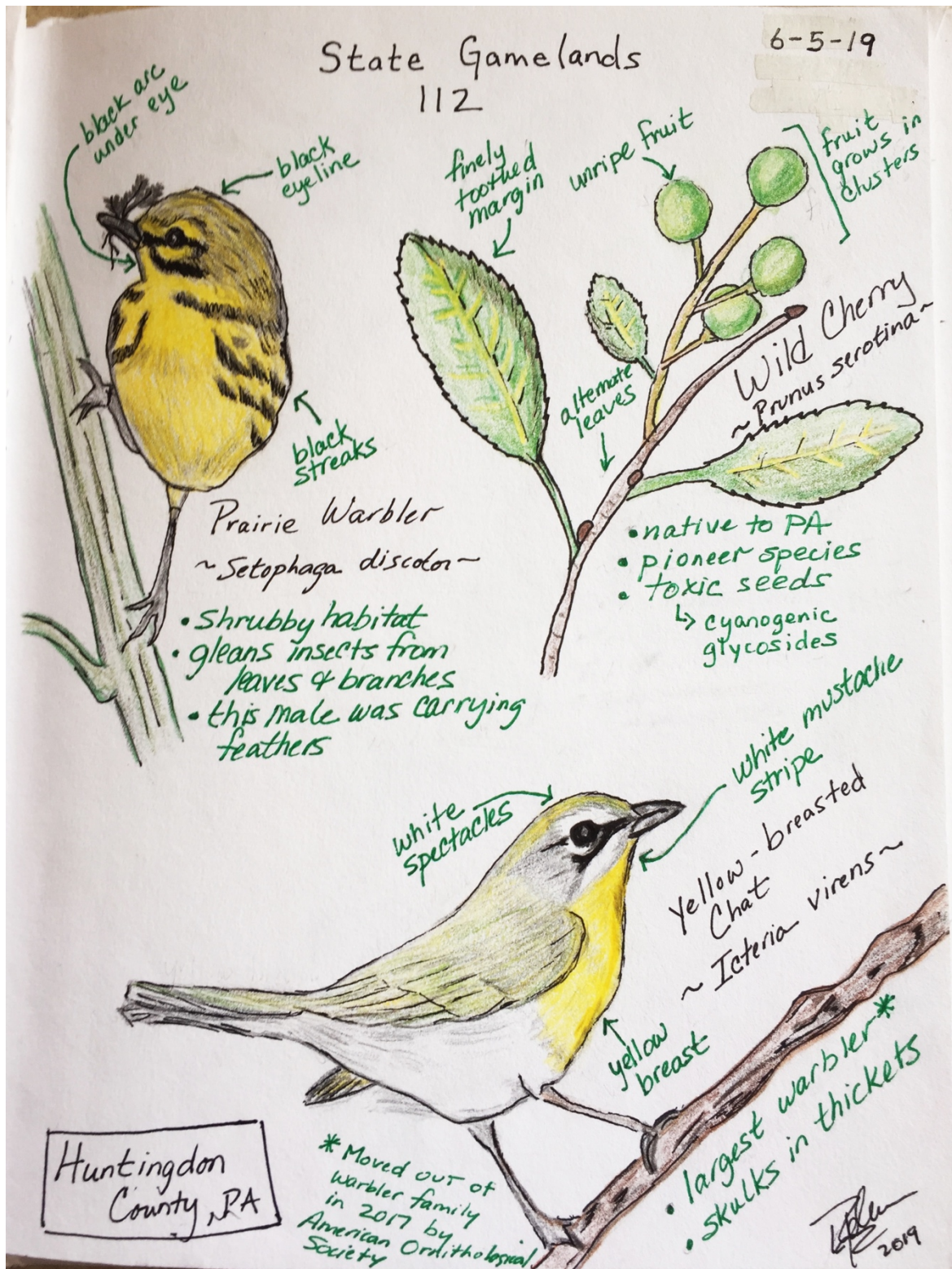


## JVAS members treasure State Game Lands as wonderful bird habitats.

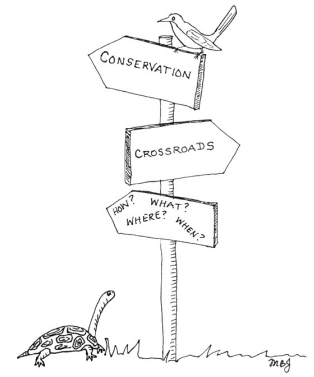
Laura Palmer memorialized her visit to SGL 112 last summer by sketching some highlights of her visit.

Laura reports that the Prairie Warbler and the Yellow-breasted Chat were "lifers" for her.

This is the very first entry in her journal.



**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](http://www.JVAS.org) Click on the Conservation tab.



## 1. A. Industrial Wind Project Proposed for Dunning/Evitt's Mountain in Bedford County

CPV Kettle Wind Project is moving forward with wind testing and property leases that will affect residents in 3 townships: Bedford, South Woodbury, and East St. Clair. The wind company plans to build 10 – 13 wind turbines but claims they will conduct a year of testing and wildlife studies before committing to the project.

**B. Invenergy's Proposed Shade Wind Energy Center on Shaffer Mountain, Somerset Co.** has been withdrawn from the PJM Grid application list, plus the 3 test towers have been removed. Although Invenergy won't return phone calls, it is safe to assume that the project is terminated. No doubt grassroots opposition was an important reason for their disappearance.: Shade Township supervisors voted to extend the setbacks from 1.5 times the turbine height to 2.5 times the turbine height to property lines, occupied buildings, and public roads.

## 2. Pumped Hydro Storage Projects:

A **pumped hydro storage project** is designed with two reservoirs – upper and lower. Like every other **hydroelectric** plant, a **pumped-storage** plant generates electricity by allowing water to fall through a turbine generator during the day. Daytime-produced electricity is then sold to the grid at a higher cost than what is used to pump the water to the upper reservoir at night. Consequently, these projects make a profit, although more electricity is used than produced. Pumped hydro storage projects are sometimes described as a “liquid battery.” While these projects are a type of renewable energy, they destroy wild habitats, farmlands, and use more electricity than they produce.

Merchant Hydro Developers, LLC wants to build three projects on the Allegheny Front: **Bacon Ridge** and **Allegheny** in Blair Co. and **Snoosh Mountain** in Bedford Co. – all three will destroy forested areas on the Allegheny Front and degrade habitat for birds and other wildlife. The reservoirs do not provide suitable habitat for wildlife and actually put birds at risk since the upper reservoir in each project is built near a wind project. The Bacon Ridge project is near Sandy Ridge wind project, Allegheny is near Allegheny Ridge wind project and the Snoosh Mountain project is near Stoney Creek wind project.

Project No. 14820 (**Allegheny**): studies are in progress. An update in the Fall of 2019 is expected.  
Project No. 14823 (**Bacon Ridge**): studies are in progress. Updated planned for Fall of 2019.  
Project No. 14833 (**Snoosh Mountain**): studies are in progress. Update planned for Fall of 2019.

**3. JVAS members are concerned about a proposed Rutter's gas/convenience/restaurant upslope from Old Crow Wetlands near Huntingdon, Pa.** Greg Grove, David Kyler, Stan Kotala, Alice Fleischer, and other JVAS members have expressed their concerns and opposition to the Smithfield Township supervisors. Stan Kotala, JVAS Conservation Committee member, stated, "I want to reiterate my ecological concerns with stormwater runoff and chemical pollution from the rainwater. There is also concern about the proposed traffic light along Route 22." According to an 8/7/19 article in the Huntingdon Daily News, the township supervisors will have "to adopt a resolution for the traffic signal, and it would have to be approved and presented for (Rutter's) Highway Occupancy Permit to be approved."

Please email the township supervisors at [smithtwp@comcast.net](mailto:smithtwp@comcast.net) to express your opposition to the proposed Rutter's and ask them to NOT approve a traffic signal resolution. The supervisors meet on the first Tuesday of each month, at 7:00 pm. The location is the township building in Smithfield, on the corner of 13th Street and Mt. Vernon Avenue, or 2 blocks south of Rt 26 (Pennsylvania Ave.). You are encouraged to attend the township meeting.

**This is a great time to visit Old Crow Wetlands just outside Huntingdon, Pa.**

**Address: 9008 William Penn Hwy, Huntingdon, PA 16652**

**Old Crow Wetlands is an eBird Hotspot! In addition to a wonderful diversity of wetland birds, two very unusual birds have been seen there: a Ruff, and a White-faced Ibis.**



L to R: Lesser Yellowlegs,  
Green Heron, Wood ducks

#### **4. Raystown Lake Draft Master Plan Revision Stakeholder Update**

**A recent email from the Army Corps of Engineers states:**

"The team is continuing to work hard to finish up the draft Master Plan. After meticulous USACE review, the draft Master Plan will be ready for public review late fall 2019.

If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out through the project mailbox at [RaystownMPRevision@usace.army.mil](mailto:RaystownMPRevision@usace.army.mil).

**What is a master plan?** In official terms, a master plan is a strategic land use management document that guides the comprehensive management and development of a project's recreational, natural and cultural resources. Every U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) lake has a master plan that serves as a framework for consistent, responsible decision-making for 15-25 years.

**What does that actually mean?** You can think of a master plan like a zoning map. It tells our staff where certain activities and changes can occur."

***Raystown Lake Master Plan Update, continued:***

***“Why can a master plan do this?”*** Master plans determine how areas of the lake should and can be used for the next 15- 25 years based off of environmental studies, boating studies, operational requirements and public opinion. These studies and findings ensure that the Master Plan will properly guide decision-making at the lake. For example, if a group proposed a new trail at the lake, our staff would need to know how this trail would impact the lake before considering approval of the idea. The Master Plan shows our team if the trail could meet the public’s needs and would give our staff proper guidance on how to proceed.

It's important to note that a master plan does not plan or approve changes or improvements to the flood risk management and hydropower functions of the lake. Raystown Lake was built for these missions, so a master plan will not allow for any adjustments to those functions.”

**Why does JVAS care about the Master Plan? JVAS has asked the Army Corps of Engineers to keep Hawn’s Bridge as a wild and natural area, instead of being developed into a resort and marina complex. Nearby forested Terrace Mountain is also at risk, if Hawn’s Bridge is developed.**



Alice Fleischer (above) and Mike and Laura Jackson kayaked to Hawn’s Bridge with botanist Eric Burkhart to look for rare plants found in this shale barrens habitat.

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**Many thanks to Marcia Bonta, naturalist and writer, for many years of service to JVAS!**

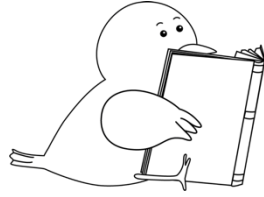
Marcia has served important roles in JVAS, most recently as JVAS Director. We have all benefited from Marcia’s leadership and her countless hours of dedication to make sure that JVAS is a successful non-profit conservation organization. We know Marcia will continue to help as needed, but for now we just want to recognize her dedication to JVAS and thank her for serving as a JVAS leader for a significant number of years.

John Carter has agreed to take Marcia’s place as Director. We’ll learn more about John in the next issue.



## Off The Shelf

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We hope "Off The Shelf" will appear in every issue of *The Gnatcatcher*, but that will only happen if you send in your reviews of natural history books. We also welcome feedback. Email Laura Jackson to contribute a book review, or if you have a comment about a book that was reviewed. Good reading!

### **THE BIG HEAT: Earth on the Brink** by Jeffrey St. Clair & Joshua Frank

Reviewed by Doug Mason

This captivating, often infuriating, collection of essays is guaranteed to be unsettling - the reader may even get angry at the authors. Jeffrey St. Clair and Joshua Frank are legendary investigative reporters who edit the political magazine and website, CounterPunch. Frank is an award-winning journalist more well known among environmental readers in the Northwest USA. St. Clair has written 13 books (among them, "A Pocket guide to Environmental Bad Guys" with Village Voice columnist James Ridgeway, and "Born Under A Bad Sky: Notes from the Dark Side of the Earth"). Jeffrey (full disclosure: I worked with him at the Hoosier Environmental Council in Indiana) is perhaps most widely remembered for co-writing the column, "Beat the Devil," with the late Alexander Cockburn in *The Nation* (a joint piece about the past use of Zyklon B on the US-Mexican border is included in this collection).

The excellent series of 50 articles in this book are environmental writing at its eloquent, state-of-the-art best. It is also a stirring call to meaningful militant action. Each piece delineates how the human species - aided and abetted by politicians, special interests, multinational corporations, ad nauseam - has taken on the unrelenting task of destroying the natural world and its supporting structures. It hits you hard between the eyes and then in the gut. Along the way the authors do show some gutsy, hard-headed individuals and organizations that have taken on the seemingly insurmountable task to combat ecocide.

Among them is Arlene Montgomery ("The Rachel Carson of the Rockies"), one of the most creative environmentalists in the country protecting fish, in particular the bull trout (a.k.a. Dolly Varden). Her tiny group, Friends of the Wild Swan, with a budget under \$50,000 yearly, by 2015 had won more decisive legal victories for wildlife and wild lands, than the National Wildlife Federation (\$88 million annual budget), National Audubon Society (\$90 million) and Defenders of Wildlife (\$30 million) combined, according to St. Clair.

The book irritatingly refers to the Big DC enviro groups such as the Environmental Working Group, the Wilderness Society, the Environmental Defense Fund and Natural Resources

Defense Council as "Gang Green." Members of such organizations know the good that our groups do fighting a situation in our nation's capital where political parties share "the same lethal ideology" of infinite consumption. There are valid criticisms that can be made of the Big Green organizations within the beltway, of course, but at times the language herein is overly abrasive. Venom is aimed at my beloved Sierra Club on several occasions, as in 2013, when executive director Mike Brune was arrested for civil disobedience (CD) at the White House while protesting the Keystone Pipeline. St. Clair brushes that personal sacrifice aside as a "vanity arrest." As someone who has been arrested for CD seven times, I was personally heartened by Brune's bravery and became active in the Sierra Club Moshannon Group (SCMG) partially as a result (I am currently Chair of SCMG).

Such complaints aside, this is a book well worth reading. It is the real story of our privatization of free-living animals, the federal malpractice that is forestry, and the pandering that got us the EPA leadership and toxic militarism controlling our lives today. St. Clair and Frank urge all of us to take on the challenge of actually acting boldly and to start doing something, and to stop with the stultifying "hope" thing.



A look back...

Artist Sam Dietz shared this lovely painting he did earlier in the year of historic "Stone Furnace (Rothrock State Forest)"

*Acrylic on board*

**JUNIATA VALLEY AUDUBON**

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**Juniata Valley Audubon Society Chapter-only Membership**

Chapter-only membership includes membership in the Juniata Valley Audubon Society ONLY. You will receive the chapter newsletter, *The Gnatcatcher*. It does not include membership in the National Audubon Society. If you want to join National Audubon, go to [www.Audubon.org](http://www.Audubon.org)

**Chapter-only Memberships: Individual - \$15/year Family - \$20/year Supporting - \$35/year  
Friend - \$50/year Corporate - \$100/year Life-time - \$500**

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**Please provide your e-mail address:** \_\_\_\_\_

Would you like to receive a digital copy of *The Gnatcatcher*? \_\_\_\_\_yes \_\_\_\_\_no

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