

The Gnatcatcher

Newsletter of Juniata Valley Audubon

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as a benefit for members of the...

JUNIATA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY



www.JVAS.org

SPRING BANQUET TUESDAY, APRIL 21, 2020
BELLWOOD FIRE HALL
SEE INSERT FOR DETAILS AND REGISTRATION

THIS YEAR'S CONSERVATION AWARD WILL BE PRESENTED TO GREG WILLIAMS.

JVAS is pleased to honor Greg Williams for his outstanding efforts in natural habitat restoration in our area. Greg and his volunteers have mounted a herculean effort to remove invasive plants and to replace them with native flowers, shrubs, and trees along the Lower Trail, Detwiler Park, and Walnut Springs Park. Join us at the Banquet to honor Greg Williams for his hard work and conservation ethic.



Our guest speaker is Dr. Don Bryant (middle) who was recently inducted into the Rosalie Edge Society of Hawk Mountain. Dr. Laurie Goodrich (L) presented the award. On the right is Don's friend, Sergio Seipke, who is writing a comprehensive field guide to the raptors of South America.

A Pictorial Tour of South African Fauna: Critically Endangered and Hanging on by Claw and Talon - presented by Don Bryant

There are 23 species of vultures, sixteen of which occur in the Old World. Twelve species occur in Africa, and eight of these are at eminent risk of extinction! Collectively, vultures are worth billions of dollars for their clean-up activities and for the protection they provide to humans against deadly diseases. This presentation will be a pictorial survey of vultures, eagles, and animals of southern Africa. Don will show photos of all the African Vultures and discuss the threats they are enduring. He will also show photos of critically endangered eagles, as well as selected other birds of prey, and will finish with some photos of charismatic megafauna—many of which are also threatened. Humans account for nearly all of these problems, and absent significant behavioral changes by humans, many of these highly valuable but threatened species will go extinct in our lifetime.

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**SPRING
BANQUET
INSERT**

Juniata Valley Audubon Society Evening Programs

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 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).

OFFICERS

President, Catie Farr

- ♦ 570-651-3839
- ♦ catiegk5059@gmail.com

Vice President, Laura Jackson

- ♦ 814-652-9268
- ♦ jacksonlaura73@gmail.com

Secretary, Sharon Clewell

- ♦ 814-207-5387
- ♦ sclewellp@hotmail.com

Treasurer, George Mahon

- ♦ 814-942-2658
- ♦ gsm815@hotmail.com

Immediate Past President, Laura Jackson

- ♦ 814-652-9268
- ♦ jacksonlaura73@gmail.com

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Membership, Debra Grim

- ♦ 814-644-5285
- ♦ dsgrim02@gmail.com

Conservation, Laura Jackson

Programs, Laura Jackson

Partners in Neotropical Bird Conservation,

- ♦ Laura Jackson

Education Committee,

- ♦ Laura Palmer
- ♦ lkp@psu.edu

Field Trips Committee, Susan Braun

- ♦ 814-574-0795
- ♦ braun3112@gmail.com

Publications & Publicity Comm.,

- ♦ Matt Karabinos
- ♦ mattkarabinos.com

Hospitality Committee, Catie Farr

- ♦ 570-651-3839
- ♦ catiegk5059@gmail.com

Historian, Mike Jackson

- ♦ 814-652-9268
- ♦ mljackson2@embarqmail.com

Website Administrator, Dave Bonta

- ♦ 814-686-7274
- ♦ bontasaurus@yahoo.com

The Gnatcatcher Editor

- ♦ Laura Jackson

DIRECTORS-AT-LARGE

- ♦ Warren Baker
- ♦ John Carter

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 "T" and travel to the stop sign. Continue straight a short distance; the library is on your right.

Program: Tuesday, March 17, 2020: "Monarchs and Macaws" Presented by Laura Jackson

Menu: Taco Bar with pork & venison (gluten free). Rice, beans, & fixings. Cinnamon sugar chips and ice cream, coffee, juice, tea.



In 2019, a small group of travelers, led by Mark & Paola visited Mexico to experience one of the greatest wonders Earth: overwintering Monarchs. The group also explored a few of the natural wonders of the Sierra Gorda – a biological melting pot unmatched in North America for its biodiversity – and even found the endangered Military Macaws.



Program: Tuesday, April 21, 2020: JVAS Banquet & Silent Auction "A Pictorial Tour of South African Fauna: Critically Endangered and Hanging on by Claw and Talon" Presented by Don Bryant

See Front Page and Insert for details and reservation form

Program: Tuesday, May 19, 2020: "Use of Electric Transmission Line Right-of-Way by breeding birds in central Pennsylvania: species richness and nest productivity" Presented by Dr. Carolyn Mahan

Menu: Chili (gluten free and vegetarian), rice, cheese and beef quesadillas, chips and salsa, black bean cupcakes (gluten free), tea, juice, coffee.

JVAS Field Trips Spring 2020

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

Check our Facebook page for updates or contact Susan.

Saturday, March 7 – Whitetail Wetlands 8:30 – 11am

Meet at the Live Well Chiropractic (formerly Eat 2 Live Bistro) on Rt. 56 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. Trip Leaders: Mike and Laura Jackson 814-652-9268. Optional Lunch at Ed's Steakhouse 4476 Rte. 220 Business, Bedford, PA 15522. Call Mike and Laura to confirm this trip, as we often have to cancel due to icy conditions. *Did you know? Whitetail Wetlands is named after the common whitetail dragonfly.*

Saturday/Sunday, March 7 and 8 - Weekend trip to Middle Creek and Conowingo Dam

Join JVAS for a weekend trip to see snow geese and bald eagles. Meet at **11am** at the Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area [visitor center](#), 100 Museum Rd, Stevens, PA 17578. We'll drive the wildlife drive and walk out to Willow Point. On Sunday, we'll head to Conowingo Dam, Shuresville Landing [parking area](#) in Darlington, Md. This is one of the best places to see bald eagles. Plan to overnight in Lancaster if you want to participate both days. Contact Susan Braun braun3112@gmail.com or call 814-574-0795 if interested to arrange carpooling and for hotel information.



Sunday, March 15 - Tussey Mountain Hawk Watch 10 – 4 pm

NOTE: Change of Date

Tussey Mountain is a spring hawk watch that focuses on Golden Eagle migration. Meet in the parking lot at Jo Hayes Vista at the top Route 26 where it crosses the top of Tussey Mountain (locally called "Pine Grove Mtn"). It is a 2/3 mile flat walk on the Mid-State Trail to the site. Dress warm, bring a folding chair, snacks and water. There are no facilities. For information, and specific directions, visit the Tussey Mt. Spring Hawk Watch [website](#). Contact: Susan Braun: braun3112@gmail.com (814)574-0795.

Saturday, April 4: Greenwood Furnace Adventure 11am - 4pm

Join Randy Caber for a visit to historic Greenwood Furnace and a hike to the Greenwood Furnace Fire Tower. This is an out and back 5.6 mile hike. The trail is steep, but we'll take our time to explore and catch our breath. Wear sturdy shoes, bring snacks, water and a hiking stick. Meet by the Blacksmith Shop which is on the same side of the road as the park office. This hike is moderately strenuous. Directions: Greenwood Furnace State Park along PA 305, about 5 miles west of Belleville. [Blacksmith Shop](#) Contact: Randy Caber 814-207-4893 for information.

Saturday, April 18: Trillium Hike 9am - 12pm

Let's walk along the Frankstown Branch of the Juniata River on the Lower Trail to look for spring wildflowers. If our timing is right, the slopes will be covered with red trillium and other spring ephemeral wildflowers such as Dutchman's breeches and bloodroots in bloom along the trail. Bring snacks and water to enjoy along the way. This is an easy walk of 3 to 4 miles and hikers are welcome to set their own pace.

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



Sunday, May 17: Shaver's Creek Walk & Live Raptor Tour 10am – 3pm \$3.00 per person.

We will take a nature walk focusing up at birds and down at wildflowers and eat a picnic lunch before enjoying a guided tour of the Raptor Center at 2pm. Bring lunch, water, and binoculars. We will meet in front of the Center at 10am. The nature walk is free, but the Raptor Center tour is \$3 payable to Shaver's Creek. **Location:** 3400 Discovery Rd, Petersburg. Contact Laura Jackson for more information.

Saturday, May 23: Bird walk at Allegheny Portage Railroad 7:30am - 10:30am

If you are interested in learning and seeing more warblers during peak migration then join John Carter and Mark Nale on the historic 6 to 10 Trail in Duncansville. We will take a gentle stroll along this trail in hopes of finding spring gems like the Blackburnian, Chestnut-Sided, Cape May, and Hooded Warblers and many more.

What to bring: binoculars, comfortable walking shoes, drink and snack.

Directions: The trailhead for the Foot of Ten Trail is located at the parking lot on Dry Run Road, Duncansville, PA 16635. Coordinates: 40.4082394 -78.4602878 [6 to 10 Trailhead](#)

Sunday, June 7: State Game Lands 198 Time and Meeting Location To Be Announced

State Game Lands 198, consists of 8,604 acres, located in Blair and Cambria Counties near Tunnelhill and west of Duncansville. The terrain is mountainous and forested, but large areas of grasslands also exist.



Tuesday, June 16, 2020: 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 roasted 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 8:15pm. **Be sure to let Hospitality Chair Catie Farr know what you plan to bring. Call her at 570-651-3839 or email [catiekg5059@gmail](mailto:catiekg5059@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!

SPECIAL EVENTS

“Managing Forests and Wildlife in a Changing World” Conference

JVAS Members are invited to attend a Forest Landowners' Conference on **Saturday, March 14.**

Where: Bedford American Legion. Address: 3721 US 220 Business (just south of Exit 1 on I-99.)

When: March 14 from 8:30am to 4:30pm, hot lunch included.

Cost: \$10 for members of Woodland Owners of the Southern Alleghenies; \$15 for non-members.

Speakers will discuss impacts of climate change on forests, forest pests, and birds with an emphasis on how forest landowners can mitigate or lessen climate change impacts.

Contact Laura Jackson if you'd like to attend. Registration is due by Saturday, March 7.

SPECIAL EVENTS

Earth Week Birding Classic Friday, April 17 – Sunday, April 26, 2020

The 5th Annual Earth Week Birding Classic will be held from **noon Friday, April 17 to noon on Sunday, April 26, 2020**. Registration is free. The goal is for teams in seven different categories to count as many species of birds as possible over a 24-hour period any time during the week beginning on **April 17 at 12 noon and ending at 12 noon on April 26**. This non-profit event is co-sponsored by the Environmental Studies program at Penn State Altoona and Juniata Valley Audubon Society. Pledges that team members garner will support bird conservation and education in central Pennsylvania. Teams of 3 or more (2 or more for Senior citizens) will count birds in Blair and surrounding counties, and prizes will be awarded during the closing ceremony at the Slep Center on the Penn State Altoona campus immediately following the event at 1 pm.



Registration deadline is Thursday, April 16.

To register and for more information, please contact Catie Farr at catiegk5059@gmail.com.



Saturday, May 2, 2020 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.

You can order native plants in advance and pick them up at the Festival. Check out more details at <http://www.panativeplantsociety.org>. Click on Events.

We are excited to report that JVAS has received an Audubon Collaborative Grant:

FREE

Bring Birds to your Backyard for Kids Ages 8 – 18

We know children are fascinated by nature, especially birds, so we are offering two workshops for children (parents or grandparents must also attend) at the Terry Wentz Education Center at Canoe Creek State Park.

Dates: Sat., June 13 & Sat., June 27, 2020 from 1 - 4 pm.
You must register in advance for these **FREE** workshops!

Attendance at both workshops is not required, but preferred

June 13: Children will learn how to use binoculars and how to identify birds - using models in the classroom and real birds outside. We will also give away bird feeders and bird seed to participants to take home after looking at examples of bird-friendly backyards.

June 27: We will play a game to identify common backyard birds, but most of the afternoon will emphasize bird-friendly backyards and how to create one using native plants that participants can take home.

Register by Friday, May 15: Call Laura Jackson at 814-652-9268 or email jacksonlaura73@gmail.com

**LOTS
OF
FREEBIES**

Meet John Carter, JVAS Board Member



John grew up in Chambersburg, PA and now lives in Port Matilda with his wife Linder and their two dogs, Timber and Dawson. He has worked for PSU World Campus as an Assistant Director for Academic Advising for the last 6 years. John received a bachelor's degree in Communications from Lock Haven, and a Master's in Counselor Education from IUP. Being active in JVAS is a good fit for John as he absolutely loves bird watching and learning about bird behavior and how we can conserve natural habitats. John enjoys the outdoors, kayaking, hiking, fishing, and photography. Many thanks to John for getting involved in JVAS.

DID YOU RENEW YET? IT'S TIME!

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. National members receive the Audubon magazine.

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

You can also renew via PayPal at: www.jvas.org/join-juniata-valley-audubon/

Name _____ Street Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____ Phone Number: _____

Please provide your e-mail address: _____

Would you like to receive a digital copy of *The Gnatcatcher*? _____ yes _____ no

Return this form with your check payable to **JVAS** to: **Juniata Valley Audubon Society**

**Debra Grim, Membership
8844 Boonie Lane
Petersburg, PA 16669**

2019 Christmas Bird Count Report

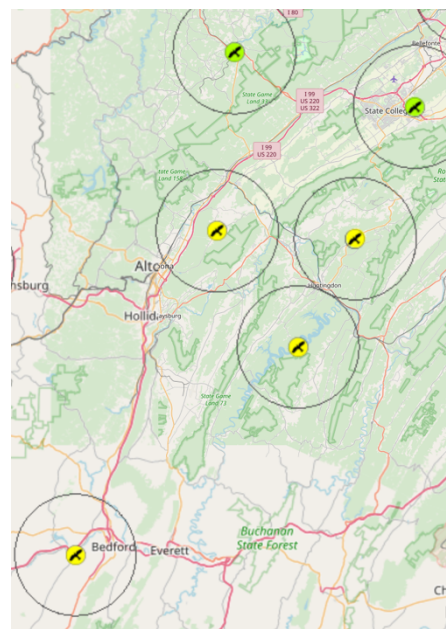
by County Compiler Laura Jackson

The Audubon Society's Christmas Bird Count (CBC) is one of the longest-running citizen science projects in existence. It launched on Christmas Day in 1900 and is still going strong. During the event, people spend time outdoors in designated areas and count the species and numbers of birds that they see and hear over the course of a single day. The data are used to keep track of the health of bird populations in North America. This year's count ran from December 14, 2019, to January 5, 2020. This was the 120th Christmas Bird Count in North America and the 51st CBC for the Culp (Blair County) Count. John Orr organized the first Culp Count on December 28, 1969. Thirty-two species were counted that year, including one that we rarely see today: Evening Grosbeak.

There are 6 CBCs conducted in the area covered by Juniata Valley Audubon Society, which might sound like a lot, but you can see on the map below that there could be better coverage between Altoona and Bedford. There are also large gaps in other areas of Pennsylvania. For example, Fulton County does not host a CBC. Any volunteers?

Kudos to the CBC Coordinators who do a tremendous job organizing the counts in our area: Greg Kojadinovich for Philipsburg, Jim Dunn and Bob Fowles for State College, Deb Grove for Huntingdon, Jon Kauffman for Lake Raystown, Laura Jackson for Culp in Blair County, and Mike and Laura Jackson for Bedford County.

The Blair County Count, centered at Culp, was scheduled for December 14, 2019. The day started with rain and ended with rain. It wasn't a total washout, but steady rain made it miserable for both birds and people. The only birds that didn't seem to be bothered were the birds that hang around water. We counted 227 Canada Geese, 137 Mallards, 2 Tundra Swans, 22 Hooded Mergansers, 17 Buffleheads, one Wood Duck, one Gadwall, 2 American Black Ducks, 5 Green-winged Teal, 2 Ring-necked Ducks, and one Ruddy Duck. Five Great-Blue Herons, 3 Belted Kingfishers and one Swamp Sparrow were seen around open water.



The rain meant that raptors were most likely perched, so harder to see: the only raptor species seen that day were 17 Red-tailed Hawks and 3 American Kestrels. Just one owl was heard: a Barred Owl in Sinking Valley. Woodpeckers were out and about: 14 Red-bellied Woodpeckers, 1 Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, 26 Downy Woodpeckers, 13 Hairy Woodpeckers, 2 Northern Flickers, and 3 Pileated Woodpeckers. That was **almost** a grand slam for the woodpecker species in our area (the elusive Red-headed Woodpecker was not seen), but numbers were extremely low compared to other years.

One of our CBC teams, led by John Carter, persevered in the rain, finding 35 species in the Bellwood sector of the circle. John reported, *"The rain didn't dampen the team's spirits – they worked hard regardless of the downpours. Their top birding spot was the Bells Gap trail. Members of John's team included his wife, Linder, Mark Nale, and Frank Nale. They have a fun tradition of predicting total*

species, total birds, most common species, as well as an outlier bird – one seen for the first time on the Count.”

Matt Greenstone has been part of George Mahon and John Orr’s team for the past two years as they search fields and forests in Sinking Valley. Matt reports, *“John and George are indefatigable about getting species that they knew ought to be where we hadn’t seen them yet.”*

We know from recent Audubon and Cornell studies that bird populations are plummeting, so a rainy day just compounds the problem – there are fewer birds and less movement, so were hard to find. Throw in the West Nile Virus (WNV) impacts on Ruffed Grouse – the last time Ruffed Grouse were counted was in 2016 -and on songbirds, and now it’s a real challenge to find birds. In 1982, counters found 371 Black-capped Chickadees in the Culp Count Circle, but this year we found only 35. We know from Nick Bolgiano’s research that WNV has caused the population of this species to drastically decline.

Even though the total number of birds seen was low at just 2,044 individuals, we did see 51 species. Complete details for the Culp Count are found at <http://netapp.audubon.org/CBCObservation/CurrentYear/ResultsByCount.aspx>. The code is PACU. The results aren’t in for all the CBCs in 2019 across North America, but in 2018 more than 2,600 species and 48 million birds were counted.

Despite the weather, we have to agree with Geoff LeBaron, director of the CBC, who said in a statement: “The Christmas Bird Count is a great tradition and opportunity for everyone to be a part of 120 years of ongoing community science. Adding your observations to twelve decades of data helps scientists and conservationists discover trends that make our work more impactful. Participating in the Christmas Bird Count is a fun and meaningful way to spend a winter for anyone and everyone.”

Counters for this year in the Culp Circle were Bill and Carol Anderson and their 8 year old granddaughter Cassi, Marcia Bonta, Susan Braun, John and Lindera Carter, Deb Escalet, Allen and Bobbi Gibboney, Matt Greenstone, Phil Hall, Paul and Allison Hutchison, Mike and Laura Jackson, Ray and Sharon Kizina, Karen Kottowski, George Mahon, Frank Nale, Mark Nale, John Orr, and Eric and Margaret Skrivseth. Many thanks to all of you!!

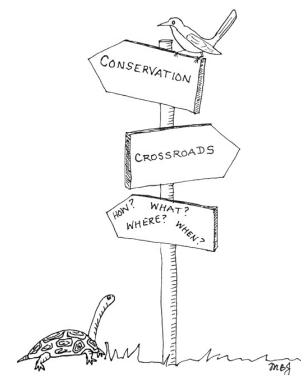
We have to thank John Orr for initiating the Culp Count. He is still helping with the CBC 51 years later! Let’s hope the CBC tradition of bird counting and conservation continues for many more years.



Studies in black and white (it was that kind of day).

Can you identify these birds photographed by Mike Jackson during the CBC? Answers on page 12.

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

County: CPV Kettle Wind Project: Nothing new to report.

Read more: www.jvas.org/category/conservation-news/wind-energy-development/

2. Pumped Hydro Storage Projects:

Background: 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** projects in Blair Co. and **Snoosh Mountain** project 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 would be near Sandy Ridge wind project, Allegheny near Allegheny Ridge wind project and the Snoosh Mountain project near the Stoney Creek wind project.

Update: A report was submitted to FERC on 12/13/19 for all three proposed projects: No. 14820 (**Allegheny**), No. 14823 (**Bacon Ridge**), and No. 14833 (**Snoosh Mountain**). The applicant now calls itself **Renewable Energy Aggregators** with an address in South Carolina. The progress reports state that various studies are continuing, but the following studies have been completed for all 3 projects: General Plan and Survey, Water Quality, Recreation, Historic and Archaeological, Preliminary Design, and Economic. A review of the PJM grid website by Laura Jackson did not show that any transmission studies have been conducted. The **Allegheny Project**, which would impact a small portion of the Allegheny Portage National Railroad Historic Site, is being reviewed by the Department of Interior and the National Park Service.

3. Proposed Rutter's Gas/Convenience Store upslope from Old Crow Wetlands near Huntingdon, Pa.

JVAS members have expressed their concerns and opposition to the Smithfield Township supervisors. The supervisors are still waiting to hear from PennDOT, which is currently reviewing the traffic changes proposed by Rutter's. 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.). Please try to attend the township meetings.

4. Raystown Lake Draft Master Plan (pages 8-125, 126) protects Hawn's Bridge

However, the Huntingdon County Commissioners have proposed that the Army Corps of Engineers provide handicapped access to the eastern side of Raystown Lake, claiming that the Corps needs to provide ADA (Americans with Disability Act) accessibility.

On Feb. 14, 2020, the Huntingdon County Commissioners, Mark Sather and Scott Walls, presented their plans for new development above Hawn's Peninsula during the Friends of Raystown Lake (FRL) meeting. While it's true that ADA accessibility standards have been a major concern for the Corps, that's not to say that that remote areas of the lake need to be improved. There are plenty of other areas, such as the Seven Points Recreation Area and the Raystown Lake Visitor Center that are ADA accessible. Residents and the public have made it clear that development on the eastern side of Raystown Lake is not supported; Terrace Mountain provides important forested habitat for bats and other wildlife. The mountainous terrain and remote site are better managed for wildlife conservation, not recreation.

5. **GOOD NEWS: Greater Sage Grouse Protected:** A federal judge has blocked the Trump administration's plans to allow expanded drilling and mining across 51 million acres of Greater Sage Grouse habitat in the western U.S. The judge ruled that the administration failed to use adequate science in analyzing how the imperiled birds would be impacted by energy development. There is currently a multistate plan to protect the Greater Sage Grouse. (From Solutions/edf.org Winter 2020).

6. **Want to Make a Difference in 2020? Make a Phone Call NOW**

Please let your federal Representative know that you value birds as an integral part of a healthy environment. Ask them to support **H.R. 5552, the Migratory Bird Protection Act of 2020.**

If you don't know your federal rep, go to: **www.house.gov/representatives/find-your-representative**.

Asking your Representative to vote for **H.R. 5552** might be the most far-reaching thing you do to help birds in 2020. Keep reading if you want to know why.

On January 30, 2020, Mike and Laura Jackson were thrilled to see an adult Golden Eagle in one of our mountain fields above Black Valley south of Everett. They watched in awe as it flew higher and higher – the light reflecting off the golden feathers on the back of its neck. There are only about 5,000 Eastern Golden Eagles in the world – and a few of them winter in Bedford County.

They knew seeing an eastern Golden Eagle was a special moment that was connected to a long history of federal laws enacted to safeguard birds and other wildlife. The Lacey Act, passed in 1900, was one of the first federal laws that started a national movement to protect wildlife instead of exploiting it. One of the key outcomes of the Lacey Act was the prohibition of killing birds for the feather trade. Even today, poaching Golden Eagle feathers for sale on the black market adds pressure to a population that is already facing many threats.

As a result of the Lacey Act, the United States and Great Britain (representing Canada), passed even tighter international legislation protecting migrating birds. In 1916, the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) was signed to further protect birds from unregulated hunting. It's one of the oldest wildlife laws in our country and it protects over 800 species of migratory birds.

The Migratory Bird Treaty Act, as well as the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act, protect birds, but that doesn't stop industry from killing them.



Thousands of Golden Eagles are killed each year from human-related causes including power lines, wind turbines, gun shots, and poisonings. This western Golden Eagle was photographed in Utah by Mike Jackson. Hopefully it was perched on an avian-friendly powerline.

Over a two-year period, 232 Golden Eagles and dozens of other migratory birds were electrocuted on PacifiCorp power lines in Wyoming. Since equipment to prevent raptor electrocutions had been readily available for years, PacificCorp was fined and agreed to repair or replace power lines so electrocutions would stop. Without the MBTA, such enforcement would not have been possible.

Recently, a new interpretation of the MBTA has been promoted that gives industry a free pass. Unless a company “deliberately” kills birds, the MBTA can’t be used to protect birds from industrial exploitation. Throughout its history, the MBTA has protected billions of birds under both Democratic and Republican presidential administrations, but now that protection is drastically weakened.

In early 2018, former top Department of Interior officials from both parties spanning back to the Nixon Administration sent a letter to the department and Congress condemning the new legal interpretation, stating in part that “the MBTA can and has been successfully used to reduce gross negligence by companies that simply do not recognize the value of birds to society or the practical means to minimize harm. Your new interpretation needlessly undermines a history of great progress, undermines the effectiveness of the migratory bird treaties, and diminishes U.S. leadership.”

The **Migratory Bird Protection Act of 2020** would reaffirm decades of practice and policy of the MBTA by every previous Republican and Democratic administration; uphold our international treaty obligations regarding bird conservation; help minimize certain industrial hazards and incentivize best management practices; and allow for financial resources to recover from incidents that impacts birds, such as oil spills. **Please call your rep. now!**

7. GOOD NEWS: 2019 Bald Eagle Mountain Hawk Watch Update – reported by Nick Bolgiano

A special one-season hawk watch was conducted on Bald Eagle Mt northwest of State College during Sep-Dec 2019. The purpose was to document the fall raptor flight, particularly of Golden Eagles, since one-day historical counts suggested that many Golden Eagles migrated southwest along Bald Eagle Mt. A paid counter, Kaitlin McGee, was hired, supported by JVAS (using funds from the Earth Week Birding Classic), Shaver’s Creek Env. Center, and State College Bird Club. JVAS members Jon Kauffman and Karl Striedieck provided key support as job coordinator and landowner host, respectively. Nick Bolgiano was field coordinator and assistant spotter.

A single season watch to understand raptor migration at Bald Eagle Mt was highly worthwhile. For most species, counts were similar to counts at the Stone Mt hawk watch. However, for four species, counts at Bald Eagle Mt were considerably higher than at Stone Mt: Turkey Vulture (+173%), Bald Eagle (+53%), Red-tailed Hawk (+39%), and Golden Eagle (+115%). **Further, the 346 Golden Eagles set a record high for the Appalachians.**

High Golden Eagle counts at Bald Eagle Mt tended to follow high counts at the Franklin Mt, NY, hawk watch, located in southeastern NY. High Golden Eagle counts at the Allegheny Front hawk watch tended to follow the high counts at Bald Eagle Mt. This suggests that Bald Eagle Mt and the Allegheny Front form the core of an important Golden Eagle migration corridor through the western ridges of the Ridge & Valley province of the Appalachians. (The name of Bald Eagle Mt changes to Brush, Canoe, Lock, Dunning, and Evitt’s Mts moving southwest toward Maryland.) Tussey Mt, Stone Mt, and Jacks Mt, all interconnected with Bald Eagle Mt southwest of Williamsport, are also part of this western Golden Eagle corridor through Pennsylvania. The Golden Eagles in the western corridor are predominantly adult birds, as opposed to Golden Eagles in the eastern corridor, where younger birds comprise a higher percentage.

The Kittatinny Ridge, where Hawk Mt and Waggoner’s Gap are located, forms the core of the eastern Golden corridor through Pennsylvania. Learning over time and stronger cold fronts during the later part of the migration period are most likely why more adults use the shorter western corridor to their core wintering area in West Virginia and the surrounding southern Appalachians. The team that conducted the watch is considering how they might follow up to learn more about fall regional raptor migration, especially of Golden Eagles, possibly at Bald Eagle Mt or at Tussey Mt.

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Bird Quiz: Left: 1 female and 2 male Buffleheads. Middle: Great Blue Heron.
Right: 2 female Hooded Mergansers in back, 2 Ring-necked Ducks in front.