

# 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 by John Carter

Dear JVAS Community,

I hope this message finds you and your family healthy, enjoying life and the birds filling up your backyard feeders. This is my first President's message for this esteemed group, and I am thrilled about this position and learning from you all on how we can continue to grow this phenomenal society.

I enjoy this intellectual environment and endless opportunities to discuss, collaborate, and generate new knowledge and goals. We can help further the mission of conservation and restoration of our natural ecosystems, focusing on birds, other wildlife, and their habitats for the benefit of humanity and the Earth's biological diversity.

We are in a unique time in which the Covid-19 Pandemic changed the way we operate our daily lives, but that doesn't mean it will stop us from helping protect our environment for the birds we love. The JVAS board is actively exploring ways to help members stay engaged through Zoom programs, sending out information via email and newsletter on conservation issues, and virtual field trips. I encourage you all to participate in these events and efforts, share your ideas with a board member, and stay involved with the environment around you.

Thank you for being a continued valued member of JVAS and I look forward to serving as your chapter's president. I am enthusiastic in what we can accomplish to make a difference in our communities. Please take care and enjoy this photo of a Barred Owl which I took while it was shaking off rain droplets.



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## Juniata Valley Audubon Society Zoom 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 Mid-Atlantic, the district 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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- ♦ Paola Bonta
- ♦ Susan Braun
- ♦ Sharon Clewell
- ♦ Laura Palmer

The JVAS Board has decided that we want all of our members to stay safe during these Covid-19 uncertain times. Because we care about your health and safety, and because we want our members to feel connected, we are offering virtual meetings this fall via **Zoom**.

Before joining a Zoom meeting on a computer or mobile device, you can download the **FREE** Zoom app from **the Download Center** (<https://zoom.us/download>). Otherwise, you will be prompted to download and install Zoom when you click a join link.

### **JVAS Fall General Meetings via Zoom:**

When: **Tuesday Nov. 17, 2020 at 7pm**

When: **Tuesday Dec. 22, 2020 at 7 pm**

**To join either one of these meetings, follow these instructions:**

**Try to log in about 5 – 10 minutes before 7 pm.**

- To join by computer, use this link:

<https://psu.zoom.us/j/97418229426>

-Use this passcode: 123456

- To join from the Zoom app on a smartphone: enter this meeting ID:

**974 1822 9426**

- To join by phone, call this number: +1 301 715 8592 (US Toll)

Enter the meeting ID followed by the pound sign.

**974 1822 9426**

**Zoom Program: Tuesday, November 17, 2020:**

**Preserving, Enhancing, and Creating Wildlife Corridors in Pennsylvania** presented by Jason Beale, Animal Care Program Director at Shaver's Creek Environmental Center

Jason will focus on the importance of wildlife corridors for migration, mating, and population viability. We will examine natural corridors as well as human-constructed, from home scale and beyond. The program will conclude with an update on the Endangered Species Coalition's efforts to garner support for HR670, a feasibility study on establishing wildlife corridors in Pennsylvania.

Jason Beale is Animal Care Program Director at Shaver's Creek Environmental Center and a volunteer with the Endangered Species Coalition's Pennsylvania Wildlife Corridor Initiative. Jason is a lifelong conservationist with a background in habitat stewardship, nature center operations, and regenerative agriculture. He lives in Pine Grove Mills, PA with his family.

## JVAS Programs

### Zoom Program: Tues., Dec. 22 at 7 pm: Blair County Christmas Bird Count (CBC) Results

This is a working meeting so CBC participants can tally their results.  
See the CBC details on page 4.

We will email the Zoom links before each meeting if we have your email address.

If you aren't getting emails from JVAS, please send us your email address so we can communicate with you more effectively. We will not share your email.

**Email: [jvas771@gmail.com](mailto:jvas771@gmail.com)**

## JVAS Field Trips

All JVAS field trips have been cancelled due to Covid-19 concerns. We encourage you to get outside as much as you can, but please follow social distance guidelines, and wear a mask. Enjoy nature by yourself or with your family.

Or, you could participate in virtual field trips! There are 11 virtual trips recorded on the Audubon PA website: <https://pa.audubon.org/chapters-centers/virtual-field-trips>

Three of the trips were presented by JVAS members Laura Jackson, Debra Grim, and Sam Dietze.

We hope to resume field trips in the spring of 2021, so stay tuned.



**to Susan Braun**

Speaking of JVAS Field Trips, we'd like to thank Susan Braun for her leadership as Field Trip Chair since the spring of 2017. Susan planned and led a number of diverse and interesting field trips that attracted JVAS members and others interested in nature explorations. Susan is now a JVAS Director and will no longer serve as Field Trip Chair.

We hope **YOU** will consider volunteering to be the new JVAS Field Trip Chair. The new chair will oversee the planning of field trips, starting in the spring of 2021, if Covid-19 conditions allow. The JVAS officers and directors will be glad to help plan trips. We already have one planned for late summer, 2021. Plus, there are traditional places we like to visit every year, so you don't have reinvent the field trip list. Please contact President John Carter if you'd like to lead us in new and familiar directions in 2021.



Due to Covid-19, the CBC will be held using social distance guidelines, so teams will be smaller with less carpooling.

## CALLING ALL CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTERS: Saturday, Dec. 19, 2020

The JVAS Blair County Christmas Bird Count (CBC), centered at Culp, will be held on **Saturday, December 19, 2020** with a Tally Count to be held via Zoom on Tuesday, Dec. 22. All are invited to attend the Zoom tally – even if you aren't a counter.

**Sign up soon to be a counter! Call or email Laura Jackson by Wednesday, Dec. 2, 2020.**  
Phone: 814-652-9268 Email: [jacksonlaura73@gmail.com](mailto:jacksonlaura73@gmail.com) or email John Carter: [carter0206@aol.com](mailto:carter0206@aol.com)

Participation is free, but you must count within the established circle, which is located within 7.5 miles of Culp. If you live inside the circle, you could count birds at your feeder and on your property, but please sign up so we know your property is covered. Counters will receive a map, a species checklist, and pointers on any hotspots that might be in your part of the circle. We hope you will spend most of the day counting birds in your area of the circle or observing the birds at your feeder if you live in the circle.

If you have a favorite part of the circle, then don't wait to call as the "early birders" get first pick of the count area. Below are the historic count areas, but anyone who lives in the circle can cover their property, just be sure to sign up so we don't overlap count areas.

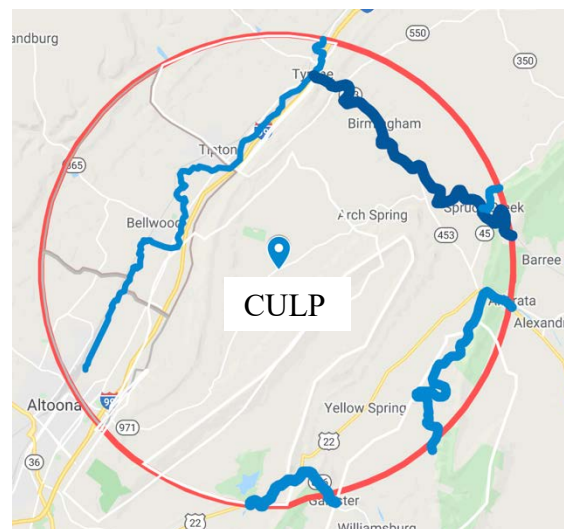
<b>Northern Altoona</b>	<b>Sinking Valley</b>
<b>Bellwood</b>	<b>Canoe Creek State Park</b>
<b>Tyrone-Tipton</b>	<b>Canoe Valley</b>
<b>Park Forest/Watts Road</b>	<b>Tyrone Treatment Plant</b>
<b>Brush Mountain (NE end)</b>	<b>Juniata River Corridor</b>

There are 3 other Christmas Bird Counts that need counters:

**Bedford County CBC is on Saturday, January 2, 2021** and is centered at Manns Choice, Pa.  
Contact compilers Mike & Laura Jackson:  
814-652-9268 or [jacksonlaura73@gmail.com](mailto:jacksonlaura73@gmail.com)

**Huntingdon County CBC is on Sunday, December 20** and is centered at Donation, Pa.  
If you'd like to help, contact compiler Deb Grove: 814-643-3295 or [dsg4@psu.edu](mailto:dsg4@psu.edu)

**Raystown CBC: Historically occurs near the end of December.**  
If you'd like to help, contact compiler Jon Kauffman: [jvk5019@gmail.com](mailto:jvk5019@gmail.com)





## An update from the Jilgueros Birding Club in Marcala, Honduras



Jilgueros Birding Club in Marcala participated in the October 17 Big Day of Birding 2020



A female white-eared hummingbird on nest

The Jilgueros Birding Club Marcala led by David Andrés Hernandez is a “sister club” that JVAS helps to fund through our partnership with Emilio Garcia, owner of Lenca Coffee Roasters. We have also donated binoculars for club members. In addition, we purchase shade-grown coffee from Emilio’s farms near Marcala, Honduras. All the proceeds are used to support bird conservation and education in Honduras and other countries outside the United States. Hats off to David who is working hard to get more kids involved in birding and conservation.

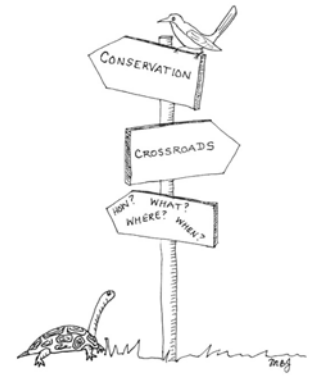
There were ten participants in the Global Big Day on October 17, 2020 who birded around Marcala, Honduras. The students used eBird to document birds at different observation sites in Marcala, La Paz, Honduras. “It was a day not only to watch birds, but also to relax, laugh, share, and drink lots of coffee on this day. Biosecurity rules were adopted at all times. Thank you to our friends and collaborators for supporting and strengthening our Club’s actions: Lenca Farms, Lenca Coffee Roasters, Juniata Valley Audubon Society, and Sister Bird Club Network.”



“Two bedrooms and a bathroom, please. The truth is, I love the symbiosis we have, Roberto.”

The birding experiences and ecology lessons will help the young birders study and protect birds. This beautiful cartoon drawn by Irene Negri is an example. Students learned that the Lineated Woodpecker excavates holes in trees for its nest. The woodpeckers abandon the cavity after they breed, so the Collared Aracari, a type of toucan, moves in and uses the cavity for its nest. The toucan helps the woodpecker because it eats fruit and drops the seeds throughout the forest, which grow into new trees that woodpeckers can use for homes. Two species that benefit each other is called mutualism, a type of symbiosis.

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

**County: CPV Kettle Wind Project.** Residents belonging to the Bedford chapter of Save Our Allegheny Ridges have repeatedly asked Bedford Township to strengthen its wind ordinance, but to no avail, so they hired an attorney who drafted a more restrictive ordinance with justification for those restrictions. A public meeting will be held at 8:30 am on Thursday, December 10 so the residents' attorney can address the township solicitor and supervisors with a formal request to protect Dunning/Evitt's Mountain in Dutch Corner, the largest historic agricultural district in Pennsylvania and an area designated as a natural heritage area of global significance.

Read more: [www.jvas.org/category/conservation-news/wind-energy-development/](http://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.

**Good News:** Merchant Hydro Developers, LLC failed to complete the necessary research to warrant preliminary permit approval for two of three projects on the Allegheny Front. The **Bacon Ridge** and **Allegheny** projects in Blair County are no longer listed on the FERC website, while the **Snoosh Mountain** preliminary permit application in Bedford Co. will expire on November 30, 2020 if the developer does not complete the FERC application requirements. The odd development is that the Snoosh Mountain project permittee is now Koosh, Inc., a company located in Idaho that has almost no web presence.

### 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.

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**JVAS MEMBERSHIP DUES FOR 2021 ARE WAIVED DUE TO COVID-19 CANCELLATIONS!**

We'd like to recognize our members who hold **Lifetime Memberships in JVAS**

Warren Baker  
Terry Carnila  
Ann Echols

Catie and Ethan Farr  
John Hunter Orr  
Karl Striedieck





## JVAS members conduct 2<sup>nd</sup> Grassland Bird Survey on SGL 198 for the Pennsylvania Game Commission (PGC) by Laura Jackson



A vast area in western Blair County that was strip mined for coal in the late 1800's and 1900's is being rehabilitated by the Blair County Conservation District, in partnership with the PGC. This area is part of SGL 198, where 35 acres were enhanced for grassland bird habitat beginning in 2018 by planting a mix of native grasses and wildflowers. The reclamation contains both habitat restoration projects and passive treatment of acid mine drainage in the watershed called Sugar Run. Limestone rock channels are used throughout SGL 198 to reduce erosion while adding alkalinity into the watershed. A series of ponds were also excavated to add alkalinity to runoff and to provide a place for metals to drop out before discharging into a nearby stream. Cattails now surround the ponds that attract birds like Red-winged Blackbirds, Common Yellowthroat, Barn Swallows, and Tree Swallows.

According to Clay Lutz, PGC Wildlife Diversity Biologist, species specifically targeted to benefit from this work include "Species of Greatest Concern such as Grasshopper and Henslow's Sparrows, Eastern Meadowlarks, and Northern Harriers. Grasslands also are important habitat for pollinating insects, and the grasslands on SGL 198 are an excellent location to spot a monarch butterfly in the southcentral region. The enhanced grassland habitat also will promote deer fawning habitat, brood habitat for wild turkeys and grouse, and provide enhanced hunting opportunities for pheasants, which are stocked within the grassland." In addition, numerous bluebird boxes have been placed throughout the grassland habitat.

JVAS members involved in the grassland bird surveys were Susan Braun, John Carter, Laura Jackson, Mike Jackson, and Mark Nale. We conducted the surveys at 6 observation points chosen by Clay Lutz and recorded birds that we saw or heard during 10 minutes of observation. We surveyed the points three times in 2019 from late June to late July and visited again in 2020 during that same time period, but we added 2 more observation points in 2020. We recorded the birds observed at each observation point, as well as recording a total count in eBird. Below is a chart showing just a few of the species we observed:

Selected Bird Species	2019 Sightings	2020 Sightings
<b>American Kestrel</b>	0, 0, 0	0, 0, 1
<b>Eastern Bluebird</b>	2, 1, 1	14, 19, 7
<b>Grasshopper Sparrow</b>	2, 10, 13	13, 23, 20
<b>Field Sparrow</b>	5, 18, 16	15, 23, 45
<b>Savannah Sparrow</b>	0, 0, 0	1, 7, 1
<b>Henslow's Sparrow</b>	4, 5, 6	5, 7, 14
<b>Eastern Meadowlark</b>	0, 0, 1	0, 2, 5



Photos by Mike Jackson at SGL 198

Left: Grasshopper Sparrow  
Middle: male monarch butterfly  
Top: Henslow's Sparrow

**JUNIATA VALLEY AUDUBON**

PO BOX 1013  
ALTOONA, PA 16603

*Address Service Requested*



**Honduran Coffee for sale on-line**

**Emilio Garcia**, our partner who produces shade-grown coffee in Honduras, has expanded his coffee sales to include sustainably harvested, shade-grown coffee from other countries. You can order freshly roasted coffee (ground or whole bean) from **Lenca Coffee Roasters**: <https://lencacoffeeroasters.com>

Fair Trade shade-grown **decaf coffee** from Colombia is also available.

Emilio sells his green coffee beans through <https://lencafarms.com>

**Remember, shade-grown coffee is good for you and good for our birds!**

