Dear JVAS Community,

I hope this message finds you and your family healthy.

It has been quite the summer with the mystery illness of the Songbird Mortality Event which is still being investigated to its cause. I do applaud all of you who acted during this time to keep your feeders down and cleaned. I do have some positive news as we flit into our Fall season and the growth of our JVAS community.

After reviewing the current JVAS boundaries we had the opportunity to add adjacent zip codes that do not have a local Audubon Chapter associated with it and are within the current counties we serve. The following zip codes which include Mifflin, Centre, and Huntingdon Counties: 16668, 16627, 15753, 16616, 16656, 16866, 16844, 16823, 16865, 16803, 16801, 16827, 16828, 17063, 17084, 17004, 17009, 17044, 17029, 17002, 17051, 17060 were thoughtfully discussed by our board and we feel it would help serve adjacent communities near the current boundaries of JVAS to help contribute to the mission and goals.

A few of the initiatives that are outside of our normal year-to-year plans, such as involving members in field trips and educational programs, is to increase diversity and education to our members. The pandemic has helped teach us that we can communicate in so many new creative methods.

If you are not getting emails from JVAS and would like to help conserve paper by receiving a digital copy of the Gnatcatcher Newsletter, please send us your email address so we can communicate with you more effectively. We will not share your email. Please Email: jvas771@gmail.com

Increasing membership will also lead to stronger efforts in communicating conservation efforts and having more people voice their thoughts to the government and local authorities on important issues that impact our environment. As the saying goes, "Strength in numbers," and if we continue to build our JVAS foundation with voices that are within counties we already serve, it will help the overall mission of Audubon.

Having folks that are not currently part of a local chapter will also help create affinity within those Audubon members and would develop a local connection.

President’s Message continued on page 4
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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- Michael Kensinger
- Laura Palmer

Juniata Valley Audubon Society Zoom Programs

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 a virtual meeting via Zoom in September.

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 link to join.

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#

SEPTEMBER ZOOM PROGRAM: Tuesday, Sept. 21 @ 7pm
“The Thousand Steps: Past, Present, and Future”
by George Conrad
See details on page 3.

OCTOBER PROGRAM: Tuesday, October 19 @ 7pm
“Wood Thrush Habitat Selection and Insights into Mature Forest Management”
by N. Scott Parkhill, Forest Program Associate for Audubon Mid-Atlantic
Location: Bellwood-Antis Library (subject to change)
See details on page 3.

We will email you in early October to confirm the meeting location. If we don’t have your email already, please send to jvas771@gmail.com. We won’t share it!!

If you’d like to join JVAS,
go to https://www.jvas.org/join-juniata-valley-audubon/ to complete the membership form or contact Membership Chair Denice Rodaniche for a paper copy.
JVAS Zoom Program for September

See Zoom link and password on previous page

Zoom Program: Tuesday, September 21, 2021 @ 7pm

“The Thousand Steps: Past, Present, and Future” by George Conrad

This presentation highlights the changing role that the Thousand Steps has played since their creation and ponders their future. The geologic history of Jacks Mountain is first covered along with the quarrying operation that led to the Thousand Steps. Then the Standing Stone Trail is discussed and how the trail system acquired the steps along with what the future may be.

The Thousand Steps is rich in history, geology, and epitomizes the toil that immigrants contributed to America’s industrial revolution. As President of the Standing Stone Trail Club, George is intimately familiar with the area of Jack’s Narrows. Join him on Zoom to learn more about this fascinating area between Mount Union and Mapleton Depot, Pa.

In-person Program (we hope): Tuesday, October 19, 2021 @ 7pm
at the Bellwood-Antis Library 526 Main Street Bellwood, PA 16617

“Wood Thrush Habitat Selection and Insights into Mature Forest Management” by N. Scott Parkhill

N. Scott Parkhill of Audubon Mid-Atlantic presents the findings of his Penn State master’s research into multiscalar habitat selection by wood thrush and discusses the practical implications for mature forest management. Transitioning from researching wood thrush habitat and forest management at Penn State to working as Audubon Mid-Atlantic’s Forest Program Associate, Parkhill will discuss the insights gained from his habitat research and how Audubon applies cutting edge research into their work at the intersection of wildlife and forest management on private lands.
President’s Message, continued from page 1:

As we continue to work together towards our mission, JVAS developed a Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging Statement:

“The Juniata Valley Audubon Society is committed to welcoming and encouraging birdwatchers and nature lovers from all walks of life. We believe we are able to grow and learn better when we are committed to inclusivity. We respect the individuality of each member, and we want to continue to engage a diverse membership; we encourage people of all races, ethnicities, genders, sexual orientation, physical abilities, religions and beliefs, and socio-economic backgrounds to embrace conservation, birding, and nature. Without a diverse perspective and a commitment to conservation, JVAS cannot move forward. Together we can work towards our goals of protecting birds and the environments they need to survive.”

Thank you for being a continued valued member of JVAS and I look forward to continuing serving as your chapter’s president. I am enthusiastic in what we can accomplish to make a difference in our communities.

If you are a National Audubon member and have received this newsletter for the first time, it’s because of our chapter territory expansion! We welcome your membership and hope to see you at an upcoming meeting or field trip.

Ask Audubon Day Saturday, Sept. 11, 2021 10 – 3pm
Martin’s Garden Center  3278 Birmingham Pike, Tyrone, PA 16686

Stop by to chat about native plants and birds with Denice Rodaniche and Laura Jackson. We’ll have Bird-Friendly Blooms (native plants that are good for pollinators, birds, and people) for sale, since Martin’s is now part of the Audubon initiative to promote native plants.

Fall is a great time to plant native perennials, trees, and shrubs. Hope to see you at Martin’s on Saturday, Sept. 11 from 10 to 3pm!!
FIELD TRIPS ARE BACK!!
Mask required if not fully vaccinated. Please follow any additional CDC/PA guidelines.

Join Angie Spagnoli, Michael Kensinger and John Carter on a late summer bird and nature walk on the Ray Amato Trail. We will stroll a little over a mile of this loop trail, which is mostly flat, and learn about the research project Angie is currently doing with introducing native plant species and removing invasive plant species to support more prey availability for birds. We will also learn about the Condo for Critters project Michael introduced to the wetland trail and the success of new resident Eastern Bluebirds, Tree Swallows and House Wrens nesting in the bird boxes placed this year.

What to bring: binoculars, comfortable walking shoes, drink, and snack as desired
Address: Meet at parking lot of the Northern Blair Co. Rec. Center: 4080 E Pleasant Valley Blvd, Altoona, PA 16601
If you have any questions or need more information please contact trip leader, John Carter, at 814-933-7426 or email carter0206@aol.com.

Saturday, September 18, 2021: 10 – 12 noon. Bird and Nature Walk on Flo and Bob Pyle’s Property featuring pollinator plantings, bluebird trail, and other natural features. It’s an easy 2 mile walk on groomed grassy trails; bring drink and a lunch to enjoy after the walk.

What to bring: binoculars, comfortable walking shoes, drink, and lunch (optional)
Address: 4113 Wells Valley Road Waterfall PA 16689-8702 (about 1 hour southeast of Altoona).
This is in conjunction with the Bedford County Bird and Nature Club. Leaders are Flo and Bob Pyle, Mike and Laura Jackson. If you have any questions, contact Laura Jackson at 814-652-9268.

Saturday, October 2, 2021: 8 – 11am. Allegheny Portage Railroad NHS--6 to 10 trail: Duncansville
Interested in seeing warblers during fall migration then join John Carter on the historic 6 to 10 trail. We will take a 2–3 mile hike along this crushed limestone trail in hopes of finding some fall gems like the Blackburnian, Chestnut-Sided, Cape May, Hooded warbler and many more, while seeing the beginning of fall foliage transformation.

What to bring: binoculars, comfortable walking shoes, drink and snack as desired.
Parking and Trail Access: Google Maps: Search “6 to 10 Trailhead” Duncansville, PA 16635 or use GPS Coordinates: 40.4082394 -78.4602878.
If you have any questions or need more information please contact trip leader, John Carter, at 814-933-7426 or email carter0206@aol.com.

Saturday, October 9, 2021 Jacks Mountain and Thousand Steps - Standing Stone Trail (SST) Hike 10 am – 5 pm. Thousands Steps parking lot
Meet at the Thousand Steps parking lot, 4 miles east of Mill Creek on Rt. 22 East. Bring lunch and drinks. We will shuttle people to the top of Jacks Mountain on a road that’s in great shape. The hike follows the top of the mountain where we’ll look at former collier mounds and a little of the former Link Trail which became the SST. Then we’ll follow the SST down the railroad grades to Thousand Steps, with points of interest along the way. The hike is moderate, but it is 6 miles long. There will be spectacular views, a little history, and we’ll end by walking down the thousand plus steps. Here is a link for the hike taking the SST: https://www.strava.com/routes/2854814049073081474
What to bring: binoculars, sturdy hiking shoes, drink and lunch as desired
Leaders are George Conrad, Mike and Laura Jackson. Contact Laura Jackson to register by October 2 via email: jacksonlaura73@gmail.com or call 814-652-9268
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.


2. 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 and we encourage you to attend the monthly township meetings, held 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.).

3. Proposed Rutter’s Gas/Convenience Store upslope of Sandy Run Exceptional Value Wetlands along Sabbath Rest Road, beside the Days Inn & Suites by Wyndham in Pinecroft, Pa.
The concerns for this Rutter’s Store (with parking for 53 trucks) are similar to those in Huntingdon. Stormwater and any hydrocarbon pollution will flow into the wetlands along Sandy Run, classified as a High-Quality Coldwater Fishery. The Pa. Fish & Boat Commission classifies Sandy Run as a Class A Wild Trout stream with naturally reproducing wild trout, thus making it an Exceptional Value wetland. JVAS and other groups are asking for a public hearing to address environmental concerns.

4. Good News: Songbird Feeding Moratorium Lifted by the Pennsylvania Game Commission
Please note: even though we’re able to put feeders back out, it’s vitally important to keep them clean. Here’s a quick overview:

- Clean feeders at least weekly to help to keep birds healthy.
- Feeders may be disinfected with a bleach solution (1/2 cup of bleach per gallon of water).
- First, clean your feeder with soap and water.
- Then soak the feeder in the bleach solution for 15-20 minutes. Completely rinse and dry the feeder before refilling it.

**JVAS COMMUNITY BIRD FEEDER CLEANING EVENT in collaboration with Tyrone Milling**

**When:** September 25th from 8am-12pm  
**Where:** 194 Ironville Rd, Tyrone, PA 16686  
**Objective and Purpose:** Bring your bird feeders to be cleaned by the JVAS board members. Learn about proper techniques on keeping your feeders clean and what to feed your Avian Friends! While you are here, stop in and check out the variety of feeder options and birdseed Tyrone Milling has to offer. We hope to see you there!  
*Please try to empty any seeds or suet prior to coming*

**VOLUNTEERS NEEDED** If you interested in helping with this event please contact John Carter, at 814-933-7426 or email carter0206@aol.com.
Join Cornell’s Birds of the World Club
JVAS received a grant to join the Cornell Lab of Ornithology’s Birds of the World Club. That means we can offer each JVAS member a 15% discount for an annual subscription, which normally costs $49.

Members can access extensive information and multimedia galleries for almost 11,000 bird species around the world. Birders, scientists, and students can obtain “the sharpest picture yet of the biology of the world’s birdlife.”

You can check out free bird previews to see what the Club offers: [https://birdsoftheworld.org/bow/home](https://birdsoftheworld.org/bow/home)

Email Laura at [jacksonlaura73@gmail.com](mailto:jacksonlaura73@gmail.com) for the Club Coupon Code.

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Results of the Earth Week Birding Classic
held April 15 through April 25, 2021

Despite the Pandemic restrictions, our annual conservation fundraiser and organized by Catie Farr, was a success. This was the 5th Classic!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Winning Team</th>
<th># Species</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Coot</strong> most bird species recorded by ages 65+</td>
<td>Black Valley Buzzards</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phoebe</strong> most bird species recorded by a family</td>
<td>Great Blue Herons</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Towhee</strong> most bird species recorded in a single county</td>
<td>2 Winners: FBI tied with Stork Raven Mad</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ruffed Grouse</strong> most bird species recorded anywhere</td>
<td>Bell Hollow Buteos</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**GRAND PRIZE WINNER!!**

Team members raised $901.05 which will be divided between the Penn State Altoona Sustainability Council and JVAS for bird conservation and education projects. Details on projects supported by this year’s Classic will be posted in a future newsletter.
Remembering John Orr: August 5, 1939-June 4, 2021
--John Carter

Over the summer, on June 4th, 2021, we lost one of our dear Juniata Valley Audubon Society family members, one of the JVAS founders in 1969, The Gnatcatcher newsletter editor for many years and our first president, Mr. John Orr.

John was a passionate birder since his childhood when his parents gave him a pair of binoculars. He was enthusiastic about participating in the Christmas Bird Count and was an official counter for the past 52 years. He was recognized by The National Audubon Society when he was presented with the William Dutcher Award for outstanding service to the Audubon cause.

One of John’s favorite poems:

“Hope” is the thing with feathers
Hope is the thing with feathers
That perches in the soul,
And sings the tune without the words,
And never stops at all,
And sweetest in the gale is heard;
And sore must be the storm
That could abash the little bird
That kept so many warm.
I've heard it in the chillest land,
And on the strangest sea;
Yet, never, in extremity,
It asked a crumb of me.
-- Emily Dickinson

I began birding with him in the late 1970s. Year after year, on every annual Christmas bird count, John pointed out a gently sloping corn field where he once spotted a Short-eared Owl. I had never seen one. Year after year on every Christmas bird count, we faithfully and hopefully surveyed that same sloping corn field to no avail. And then, on John's last Christmas bird count in December 2020, just up the road, splendid and plain as day, maybe 30 feet from our car, perched maybe 10 feet up in an arborvitae we got to see a Short-eared Owl. John was a kind, intelligent, gentle and unpretentious man.

-- A reflection from George Mahon

Early in December 1978 we received a phone call from a soft-spoken man who introduced himself as John Orr, a member of the Juniata Valley Audubon Society. At the time I was writing a weekly nature column for the Altoona Mirror called “Brush Mountain Notebook,” and John was inviting me and my family to participate in the Christmas Bird Count. He gave me the necessary information and I promised to count on December 17. At the time, our oldest son Steve was a keen birder and so we went out together to scour the forest and field, while the rest of the family kept an eye on our birdfeeder hanging from the back porch. Later, we called in our numbers and species to John and thus began a family tradition that has continued to this day.

Because of a prior commitment, we could not attend the annual CBC covered dish supper that was held then in the Sinking Valley Grange Hall. But our family did start to attend the monthly meetings of JVAS.
Probably my favorite memory of John was the JVAS 1981 January field trip to find Arctic birds in nearby Sinking Valley. John’s favorite place to look for birds during the CBC. I believe he also drew the original map for the CBC that we still use. I wrote a column about that field trip called “Arctic Adventuring in Sinking Valley” and it was an Arctic day. Twelve of us were going to look for horned larks that still do glean the corn stubble in the open fields of the valley in the winter.

Quoting from my column: “It was not a propitious day. The thermometer stood at five degrees, the wind howled across the fields and occasional snow squalls obscured our vision. We looked like teddy bears, swathed as we were in layers of clothes, and we were evenly divided—six men and six women ranging in age from 16 (our son, Steve) to 70.”

No one was abroad but our gang. It was the day of the Super Bowl playoffs. But it was our lucky day despite the cold. Al Burd, one of our older members, told us he had seen rusty blackbirds on his way to our field trip at Arch Spring. And there they were, wading in the stream in the company of a flock of robins.

After that excitement, John told us to look for freshly manured fields which would attract Arctic songbirds because of the seeds in the manure that have passed through the digestive systems of domestic animals.

“Then John pointed ahead in the furrows at what looked like a hundred brown mice skittering around in the corn stubble. We adjusted our binoculars and had a marvelous view of horned larks with their yellow throats and foreheads, black sideburns and small black horns.”

The unusual cold that year had brought in some visitors we rarely see. Even as we continued our trek around the valley. Steve spotted a rough-legged hawk flying over a distant woodlot.

Finally, we ended our field trip at dusk, having seen not only the Arctic visitors, but an eastern meadowlark, two red-tailed hawks, a purple finch, a hairy woodpecker, northern cardinals, and a mixed flock of red-winged blackbirds and brown-headed cowbirds.

It was a field trip none of us ever forgot. And still another reason our family was glad that John had called us back in 1978 to join JVAS.

-- A reflection from Marcia Bonta

Although we did not know John for a long time, we were struck by the fact that John was still keenly excited about birds and the JVAS Chapter some fifty-two years after he started it. The 50th Anniversary Celebration of JVAS, in 2019, was dedicated to John – a small tribute to a great person.

-- A reflection from Mike and Laura Jackson
A Big Welcome to Dr. Allison Cornell, the new JVAS Education Chair:

Dr. Allison Cornell is an ornithologist at Penn State Altoona in the Biology Department. Allison conducts research on nest box breeding birds and studies how environmental context, behavior, and physiology of individuals interact to limit or enhance survival and reproduction. She earned her PhD in biology from Simon Fraser University and her BS in biology from the College of William and Mary. In her free time, Allison enjoys reading, hiking with her husband, and running.

A Big Welcome to Michael Kensinger, the new JVAS Director-at-Large:

Michael is a wildlife artist, blogger, birder and nature enthusiast based out of Altoona, Pennsylvania.

Michael is an award-winning wildlife artist, whose passion is bringing nature into the homes and offices of those who appreciate it. Through his paintings, and illustrations, he aims to raise appreciation of our natural world for posterity. Michael was the artist who won the 2021 Pennsylvania Waterfowl Management Stamp Contest, with a painting of Wood Ducks titled "Sycamore Retreat" that became the most recent conservation stamp and print series for the Pennsylvania Game Commission. The conservation stamp and prints from this program have saved over 5,000 acres of wetland in Pennsylvania. He also enters the Federal Duck Stamp Contest, and while he has yet to win this national honor, he still supports the program which has saved nearly 7 million acres of wetland in North America.

When he isn't creating, or working, Michael enjoys supporting wildlife through fundraising. Annually, he holds a fundraiser to assist his favorite local non-profit Centre Wildlife Care. More recently, he has begun a "Condos for Critters" fundraiser that has allowed him to place 23 nest boxes for various species around various mitigated wetlands in Tipton, PA. He is now expanding into other areas with the fundraiser and looks forward to placing many more boxes by winter.

In addition to wildlife, Michael and his partner, Tim, have 7 domestic ducks that were rescued from certain death as "dumped farm ducks", and give them a loving and caring home where they can prosper in
safety. All in all, the well-being, and future of wildlife is at the core of who Michael Kensinger is, and he looks forward to being of service to JVAS.

To order a limited edition artist proof and to support the PA State Duck Stamp, email Michael at MichaelKensinger@gmail.com.

To support the PA Game Commission’s CONSERVATION edition of prints and stamps, call “The Outdoor Shop” Monday - Friday 8 am - 4 pm at 1 (888) 888-3459.

To support public Federal wetlands, purchase the current Federal Duck Stamp from your local Post Office.

**JVAS Volunteer Project: Grassland Bird Surveys at SGL 198**

JVAS members involved in the grassland bird surveys in 2021 were Susan Braun, John Carter, Laura Jackson, and Mike Jackson. They conducted the surveys at 6 observation points chosen by Clay Lutz, PGC Wildlife Diversity Biologist, and recorded birds that we saw or heard during 10 minutes of observation at each observation point. We surveyed six points three times in 2019 from late June to late July and visited again in 2020 and 2021 during that same time period, but we added 2 more observation points in 2020 and 2021. 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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Selected Bird Species</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>2021</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American Kestrel</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Bluebird</td>
<td>2, 1, 1</td>
<td>14, 19, 7</td>
<td>11, 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grasshopper Sparrow</td>
<td>2, 10, 13</td>
<td>13, 23, 20</td>
<td>19, 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field Sparrow</td>
<td>5, 18, 16</td>
<td>15, 23, 45</td>
<td>27, 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Savannah Sparrow</td>
<td></td>
<td>1, 7, 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henslow’s Sparrow</td>
<td>4, 5, 6</td>
<td>5, 7, 14</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Meadowlark</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2, 5</td>
<td>6, 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Grasshopper Sparrow’s typical song is a thin, insect-like buzz preceded by two or three ticking chips, *tick tick pzzzzzzzzzz*, hence the name Grasshopper Sparrow.

-Photo by Mike Jackson
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](https://lencacoffeeroasters.com)

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

Emilio sells his green coffee beans through [https://lencafarms.com](https://lencafarms.com)

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